

# Information Booklet for unmarried parents

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## About this booklet

Treoir believes all families should be valued equally, regardless of the marital status of the parents. There are however differences in family law for married and unmarried parents. Although Treoir is conscious that the term "unmarried" carries a lot of stigma for many people which we do not want to further, at the moment this is the commonly used reference to describe all parents not based on marriage. In this booklet, unmarried parents refers to one-parent families (or lone parents), parents sharing access and custody, cohabiting couples who are not married, non-resident parents who were never married to the other parent. Unless otherwise stated, it does not refer to parents who were married but are now separated or divorced.

**LGBT+ parents:** Treoir aims to be a welcoming organisation for all families, including LGBT+ parents and any parents (both opposite-sex and same-sex parents) who had children through donor-assisted human reproduction and surrogacy. In this booklet, we used gender neutral language as much as possible 1) to avoid reinforcing gendered notions of parenting responsibilities between opposite-sex parents, and 2) to include as many parents as possible 3) to be inclusive of all children. However, the Irish legal system is different between children born to opposite-sex unmarried parents and children born through donor-assisted human reproduction and surrogacy

For clarity, 'Mother' is used in this booklet in relation to the parent who gave birth to the child, independent of how they identify. 'Father' is used for the other biological parent of the child, independent of how they identify.

Therefore, this book is primarily intended for (1) opposite-sex parents, (2) parents who were never married to each other, (3) and parents who did not have children through donor-assisted human reproduction.

**For any LGBT+ parents who are struggling with their rights and responsibilities, we recommend you get in contact with Treoir over the phone, through email or through our social media channels.**

To keep up-to-date with relevant budget and legal changes, visit our website [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie), follow us on Facebook and Instagram or phone Treoir's Information Service at 01-6700 120

The information in this Pack is not to be considered medical or legal advice. Specific medical or legal advice should be obtained from a registered health or legal professional.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, no responsibility can be accepted by Treoir for any error or omission. The Pack is a guide only.

**DATE OF PRINT: March 2026**

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- Treoir is a membership organisation which promotes the rights and welfare of unmarried parents and their children in Ireland.
- Treoir provides a specialist, national, free, confidential information service to:
  - unmarried parents - mothers and fathers
    - living together
    - living apart
    - opposite and same-sex
  - grandparents and other relatives
  - professionals working with unmarried parents.
- Treoir provides outreach information work-shops on request to groups of unmarried parents and those working with them on legal issues, social welfare, parenting etc.
- Treoir is responsible for the coordination of the Young Parents Support Programme (YPSP)
- Treoir is responsible for the project coordination of Kinship Care (KCI)
- Treoir is a non-governmental organisation funded by the HSE Sexual Health Programme, TUSLA, the Citizens Information Board and Pobal.

# Guardianship

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-guardianship.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-guardianship.php)

## What is guardianship?

Guardianship means having the right and responsibility to be involved in making major decisions about the upbringing of a child, for example

- Where the child lives
  - Passport applications
  - Consent to taking the child out of the country
  - Where the child goes to school
  - Consent to medical treatment
  - Religion of the child
  - Consent to adoption
- ...and other matters affecting the welfare of the child.

## When a child is born who is automatically its guardian?

The mother is always a guardian. A father does not have automatic guardianship rights at the time of a child's birth even if his name is on his child's birth certificate.

## How does the father get guardianship rights?

- By signing a Statutory Declaration (form S.I. No. 201 of 2020) with the mother, if she consents. The form can be downloaded from the Guardianship section of our website [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)
- The statutory declaration can be witnessed by any of the following:
  - a solicitor
  - a peace commissioner or commissioner of oaths
  - by the register for birth, death, and marriages
- By satisfying the cohabitation period: A father who lives with the child's mother for at least 12 consecutive months including not less than three months after the child's birth, will automatically be the guardian of their child. The three month period does not have to take place directly after the birth of the child. It can be fulfilled any time before the child turns 18 provided it is part of the 12 consecutive months during which the parents have lived together. The cohabitation period can only be calculated going forward from the commencement date of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. This means that guardianship will only be acquired automatically where the parents live together for at least 12 months after the 18th of January 2016. **While not mandatory, fathers in this situation can and should seek a formal declaration from the court that the 'living together' test has been satisfied and that the father is a guardian of the child.**
- By applying to the local District Court to be appointed a guardian
- By marrying the mother.

**A father does **not** automatically have guardianship rights if his name is on the birth certificate.**

## Who else can become a guardian?

Since the commencement of the relevant legislation contained in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, on the 18th January 2016, it is possible for a person other than a parent to apply to court to be appointed as guardian of a child.

An application can be made by:

- a person who is married to or is in a civil partnership with, or has been for over 3 years a cohabitant of a parent of the child and has shared the responsibility of the day-to-day care of the child for at least 2 years.
- a person who has provided for the day-to-day care of the child for a continuous period of 12 months or more and where the child has no parent or guardian who is willing or able to exercise guardianship rights and responsibilities in respect of the child. TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, will be notified of such an application.
- a person who is appointed as a testamentary guardian. See below for more details.

## Temporary Guardianship

A qualifying guardian\* may nominate a person to act as a guardian if they are unable, through serious illness or injury, to exercise his/her guardianship rights. The nomination form is available on [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) under the 'guardianship' section

\*A qualifying guardian of a child is someone who:

- Is the child's parent and has custody of them, or
- Is not the child's parent but has custody of the child instead of any living parent.

## Testamentary Guardianship - Make a will

All parents who are guardians, but especially parents who are sole guardians, should make a will appointing guardians of their children to act on their behalf in the event of their death.





# Custody and Access

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-access-and-custody.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-access-and-custody.php)

## Custody

Custody is having the responsibility for the day-to-day care of a child.

### Who has custody?

Where parents are not married to each other:

- The mother of a child born outside marriage has automatic sole custody of the child. Where both parents agree, it is possible for them to share custody (joint custody) of the child on an informal basis. If parents are having difficulty agreeing joint custody they could consider mediation (see page 17) or Collaborative Law (see page 5).
- Where an agreement for custody and/or access is entered into and made in writing (including written agreements made during mediation), an application can then be made to court for an order to make that agreement a Rule of Court.
- Where the parents cannot agree, the father can apply to the local District Court for joint or sole custody.
- In certain circumstances, relatives and certain other persons can apply to the court for custody or joint custody of a child. For detailed information see 'Access and Custody' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

## Access

Access is the right of a child and a parent and/or guardian who do not live together to spend time together. This right can also be granted to relatives and others.

### Who has access?

- Where one parent has full custody that parent can informally agree to the other parent having access to their child.
- If parents are having difficulty agreeing access they could consider mediation.
- The other parent can go to the local District Court to apply for access.

Any person who is related to a child (for example grandparent, step-parent, aunt, uncle) or who has acted as a parent to the child (in loco parentis) and certain other persons can apply to the local District Court for access to a child.

## What is Mediation?

If you are having difficulty reaching agreement about times/places of access or any parenting issues you could try mediation. Mediation is where a third party, a mediator, attempts to help parents reach agreement and to work out arrangements concerning their children. See page 17.

## Collaborative Law

Collaborative Law is another way of sorting out family disputes. Parents work with specially trained solicitors. They receive legal advice and guidance and together with their solicitors, discuss and try to sort out issues through face-to-face meetings. Contact the Association of Collaborative Practitioners on email: info@acp.ie or visit www.acp.ie.

**If you think you might qualify for Legal Aid contact your local law centre, 066 947 1000 or visit or visit [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)**

With all cases involving children, any decision made by the court will be made in the best interests of the child and the court will consider the views of the child where possible given their age and understanding.

## Enforcement Orders

Where there is a court order in place for either access or custody and the access or custody is either unreasonably denied or not taken up, a parent/guardian of the child may apply to the court for an enforcement order. Before making an enforcement order the court will consider the views of the child where possible given his/her age and understanding.

The enforcement order may provide for one or more of the following:

- that a parent and/or guardian be granted additional access to the child
- that a parent and/or guardian be reimbursed for any expenses they may have had as a result of the refusal to either take up or allow the access
- that either or both parties do one or more of the following: receive information about the availability of mediation, attend a parenting programme, attend family counselling.

**Many people represent themselves in the District Court – see Treoir’s booklet Taking the Stand.**

# Cohabitation

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/target-co-habiting.php](http://www.treoir.ie/target-co-habiting.php)

## Who are cohabitants?

Cohabitants are two opposite or same-sex adults who are:

- Living together in an intimate and committed relationship.
- Not married to each other.

If you are a 'qualified cohabitant' and your relationship ends, either through separation or death, you may be able to apply to the court for rights under the 'redress scheme'. You do not have to be a qualified cohabitant to seek maintenance for a child (see page 8).

## Who is a qualified cohabitant?

You are a qualified cohabitant if you:

- have been cohabiting for at least 5 years or 2 years if you have had a child together and you must be able to show that you are financially dependent on your ex-partner.

NOTE

- You cannot be a qualified cohabitant if either of you is married to someone else and have not been living apart from your spouse for at least 4 of the previous 5 years.

## What can I apply for under the redress scheme?

If you are a qualified cohabitant you can apply to the court for certain orders, including a Compensatory Maintenance Order, a Property Adjustment Order and/or a Pension Adjustment Order.

NOTE

- You must apply within 2 years of your relationship ending.
- Generally you must have been living in Ireland for the year before your relationship ends in order to make an application.
- Should your partner die you can claim from their estate without having to show financial dependence.

## Cohabitants' Agreements

Cohabitants can make a cohabitants' agreement dealing with their finances. It is also possible to make a legal agreement to opt out of the redress scheme.

# Other things cohabitants should know:

## Fathers

An unmarried father does not have any automatic legal rights to his child even if his name is on his child's birth cert. However, if after the 18th of January 2016, a father at any time cohabits continuously with the mother of his child for a period of 12 months, including 3 months after the child is born, he will automatically become the guardian of his child. It is recommended the father applies to the court, for a declaration of guardianship to have his guardianship recorded. For more information, see page 2.

## Property

Cohabitants are not treated in the same way as married people in relation to any property they may own or share.

Where a house is being bought jointly it is advisable to sign a co-ownership agreement. Check with a solicitor whether it is best for you to have a Joint Tenancy or Tenancy in Common in relation to the house

## Inheritance Tax

Cohabitants do not have automatic inheritance rights from each other.

- Cohabiting partners pay Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT) at 33% on gifts/inheritance over €16,250.
- You can receive a gift or inheritance of a home without paying CAT under certain conditions. See 'Cohabiting Parents' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

## Income Tax

Cohabitants cannot claim income tax relief in respect of each other.

## Social Welfare

Co-habiting couples are mostly treated in the same way as married couples for social welfare payments, and the income of both co-habitants will be considered when assessing means. In 2024, the supreme court ordered the state to introduce legislation that included cohabiting couples in the state contributory Widow's pension. In 2025 legislation was passed extending the widow's pension to co-habiting couples, this payment is called the bereaved partners pension, further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/services/bereaved-partners-contributory-pension/>

## Domestic Violence

A cohabitant can apply for a safety order, a barring order or an interim barring order and/or a protection order. See page 35.

## Children of cohabiting parents

All children have the same succession and maintenance rights whether their parents are married or not.

# Maintenance

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-maintenance.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-maintenance.php)



There is no set amount of maintenance. It depends on the financial situation of the parents

## Maintenance for the child

Both parents have a duty to financially maintain their dependent children up to the age of 18, up to the age 23 if the child is in full-time education, or indefinitely if the child has a disability that means they cannot maintain themselves.

A cohabitant of a person who is a parent, or a cohabitant of a person who has the day-to-day care (in loco parentis), of a child may have to financially maintain the child, where they are not the parent but is a guardian. If a non-parent is ordered to pay maintenance the order will remain in place up until the child is 18 years of age (unless the court orders otherwise).

### Arranging Maintenance

- Informal agreements may be made regarding maintenance.
- It can be difficult to agree on a figure. Write down the actual cost of rearing your child.
- Try and be reasonable about what each of you can contribute from your income, social welfare payments etc.
- If you cannot agree on a figure you could try mediation. See page 17.
- If this doesn't work, you can apply to court for a maintenance order.
- There is no set amount of maintenance. It depends on the financial situation of the parents
- €150 is the most the District Court can order for each child per week. There is no maximum amount in the Circuit Court.
- Either parent can go back to court and ask to have the amount increased or decreased as circumstances change. This is called a **Variation Order**.
- If the other parent doesn't pay then you can ask the court for an **Enforcement Order**. You can also ask their employer to deduct the amount of maintenance from their wages. This is called an **Attachment of Earnings Order**.  
The employer sends the maintenance amount to the court who then passes it on to you or the employer may send it directly to you. An Attachment of Earnings Order can be requested at the first court hearing for maintenance.

### **Maintenance for qualified cohabitants:**

If at the end of your relationship you are a 'qualified cohabitant' and can show financial dependence on your partner you may apply to the court for maintenance under the redress scheme. See page 6.

### **What if the parent who is, or should be, paying maintenance lives abroad?**

A person who wishes to apply for, vary or enforce maintenance from a person who lives outside of Ireland may seek the assistance of the Irish Central Authority for Maintenance Recovery, provided that the country where the other parent lives is signed up to the relevant UN Convention, or is party to the EC Council Regulation 2009 (see links at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)). This includes all EU countries and the USA ,  
Tel: +353 (0)1 859 2232 / E-mail: [mainrecov@justice.ie](mailto:mainrecov@justice.ie)

**Since June 2024, your One-Parent Family Payment is not affected by child maintenance payments. Child maintenance is still considered for other forms of means testing, such as rent supplement remove rent supplement and replace with 'local authority housing supports' and medical cards, see page 22 & 27 for details. For more information see 'maintenance' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).**

### **Contact**

Find your local Law Centre:  
The Legal Aid Board  
066 947 1000  
[www.legalaidboard.ie/en/contact-us/find-a-law-centre/](http://www.legalaidboard.ie/en/contact-us/find-a-law-centre/)

District Court Family Law Office  
Dublin  
01 888 6355  
Find your local District Court  
office at [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)

Central Authority for Maintenance Recovery Abroad  
Department of Justice and Equality  
51 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland  
Tel.: +353 (1) 859 2232  
e-mail: [mainrecov@justice.ie](mailto:mainrecov@justice.ie)  
website: <http://www.justice.ie>

# Establishing paternity / DNA testing

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-paternity.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-paternity.php)

Where parents are not married to each other and a man's name is on a child's birth certificate then he is presumed to be the father of that child (this does not give the father any legal rights to the child).

It may be necessary, for legal reasons or 'peace of mind', to have a paternity test done where paternity is disputed. If a parent/alleged parent refuses to undergo paternity testing, it may be necessary to go to court. The court may order that paternity testing be carried out as part of a court procedure, for example: access, maintenance and/or guardianship. A judge can draw inference from a refusal to take a DNA test. It is also possible to apply to the Circuit Court for a Declaration of Parentage.

## Testing Procedure

Testing is carried out using either blood samples or mouth swabs (inside of mouth) taken from the mother, child and alleged father. Samples are taken by the testing service or it may be possible for the testing service to send a kit to your GP who will then take samples. It is important to note that not all GPs provide this service. Results should be available within 2 - 3 weeks.

*Note: Where the father refuses to be named, or the mother refuses to name the father on the child's birth certificate, test results alone are not sufficient evidence to put the father's name on the birth certificate. However a court order for maintenance, access, guardianship or a declaration of parentage can be used as evidence of paternity to put the father's name on the birth certificate.*

**Having the father's name on your child's birth certificate helps to establish your child's sense of identity as they grow up.**

For contact details of some of the paternity testing services see [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

When using a company for DNA testing it is important to make sure it has been approved by an appropriate authority. It is important to note that companies often offer two types of DNA tests – 1) 'peace of mind' tests which are cheaper but will not be accepted by the court, and 2) 'legal' tests which are more expensive and can be used for court purposes.



See 'Establishing Paternity' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)  
Tel: 01 6700 120 Email: [info@treoir.ie](mailto:info@treoir.ie)

# Registration of Births

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-registration.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-registration.php)

## Important things to remember:

- 1 Where possible, it is important for your baby to have the names of both their parents on the birth certificate.
- 2 Having the father's name on the birth certificate does not give him any legal rights to his child. See 'Guardianship' on page 2.
- 3 A child has a right to be financially maintained by both parents and to inherit from them. This applies whether or not the names of both parents are on the birth certificate.
- 4 Where the father's name is on the birth certificate, this does not prevent the mother from getting One-Parent Family Payment.
- 5 Having the father's name on the birth certificate can also be important in relation to the child's right to citizenship. Please note that if an unmarried mother does not have Irish/EU citizenship, but the biological father does, the child may be entitled to citizenship, but the father's name would need to be registered on the birth certificate. A parent of an Irish or EU Citizen may have the right to live in Ireland. For more information on this scenario, please call us on (01) 6700 120.

Your baby should be registered within 3 months of the birth. Register at your local registrar's office. See [www.civilregistrationservice.ie](http://www.civilregistrationservice.ie) to find your local office.

## Legislation changes - Compulsory registration of a father

From 10th December 2025, new birth registration legislation requires a mother who is not married to the father of her child to provide his details when she is registering their child's birth. This legislation is designed to provide the child with fuller access to biological information in relation to their parents. Currently less than 3% of births are registered without the father's name being included.

The new measure will require the mother to provide contact details for the father. The Registrar will then write to him to advise of the steps he should take should he wish to have his details entered as the child's father in the register of births. The child's surname will not be registered during this process. If the father is identified and accepts paternity, he will have a say in choosing the child's surname.

Where the father does not accept his paternity or reply within 28 days, the birth will be registered without his details, however, these can be recorded later under existing birth re-registration legislation.

The new legislation also allows for situations not to register the father's name where the mother has a compelling reason:

- If the mother believes she has a compelling reason, she can provide a statutory declaration to declare that she does not know who the father is or that she does not know where the father is living.
- The mother can also provide a statutory declaration along with evidence where she wishes to declare that it would not be in the best interests of the safety of her child to provide the registrar with the details of the child's father.

There is no change to existing registration procedures of recording the name of the father where the father either attends with the mother or provides the mother with a statutory declaration, or where the parents are married to each other.

## Surnames

Parents can choose

- Mother's surname.
- Father's surname (but only if the father's name is going on the birth certificate and he agrees).
- Both parents' surnames - a double-barrelled surname - hyphenated and in any order (but again, only if the father's name is going on the birth certificate and they agree).

## How can the father's name be registered?

- Both parents can register the birth together.
- The mother can complete a declaration form naming the father (Form CRA 1) and bring it along with a declaration by the child's father (Form CRA 3) acknowledging that he is the father of the child. The declaration must be correctly witnessed. The mother then completes the register.
- Alternatively, the father can complete a declaration form acknowledging that they are the father of the child (Form CRA 2) and bring it to the Registrar's Office. They must also bring with them a declaration by the mother, correctly witnessed, naming the father (Form CRA 4). Note that all these forms are only available in the Birth Registration office and not online.
- Either parent can show a copy of a court order naming the father, e.g. access, maintenance or guardianship. You do not need the consent of the other parent but they will be informed. The consent of both parents is required to change the child's surname.

## Re-Registration

- If the child has been registered in the mother's name only, it is possible to re-register the birth at any time to have the father's details added. See above.

## Birth Registration for Children Conceived Through Donor-Assisted Human Reproduction

If an opposite-sex couple conceived a child through an Irish registered donor-assisted human reproduction clinic with a traceable donor sperm or egg, both people can be registered on the birth certificate. The birth mother will be named as the 'parent' or the 'mother' on the birth certificate, even if she is not the biological parent of the child. If it is the father's sperm or a donor's sperm, he will have the choice to be registered as the 'father' or 'parent' on the birth certificate. If a female same-sex couple conceived through donor-assisted human reproduction, the woman who didn't give birth can be registered as the parent on the birth certificate. These cases can be very specific to a family's circumstances so if you would like to find out more about your family's situation, please call Treoir on 01 6700120 and we would be happy to explain your rights and responsibilities.

The Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 will, when commenced, make it compulsory to register the father's name on his child's birth certificate (with some exceptions) and will change much of the information in this section. To keep up-to-date with these changes, visit [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie), follow us on Facebook or phone Treoir's information service on 01 670 0120.



# Think before you register!

## Changing a child's surname

It is possible to change a child's surname on his/her birth cert by:

- **Marriage.** Where the parents marry each other following the birth of their child and they both agree to the change.
- **Re-registration.** The birth is being re-registered to add the father's details and both parents agree to the change.

Changing a child's surname through Deed Poll or Common Usage requires the consent of both guardians.

- **Deed Poll.** The Deed Poll is an official document that shows a person has changed their name. The Deed Poll can be used with the birth certificate as proof of change; however, it is no longer accepted by the Passport Office.
- **Common Usage.** A new name is 'commonly used'. It is possible to use this name on a passport if you can show two formal documents proving you have used this name for at least two years. In the case of a child, documents from their school and GP are considered formal documents.

## If you are/were married to a man who is NOT the father of your baby and you want to put the birth father's name on the birth certificate.

In order to proceed you must have a sworn statement from the father swearing he is the father and have either:

- a sworn statement from your husband saying they are not the father / a deed of separation and a sworn statement from you saying you were living apart from your husband for more than 10 months before the birth of your child / an Irish divorce dated or stating that you were living apart from your husband for at least 10 months before your child was born. To make sure a foreign divorce is valid check this out with the General Register Office / any court order which names the biological father as father, e.g. guardianship, access, maintenance.

## There are 2 scenarios for divorced mothers:

1. The mother's divorce is dated prior to the 10 months before the birth of the child and the mother is not married, and the birth can be registered as normal for unmarried parents.
2. The mother's divorce is dated within the 10 months prior to the birth of the child and before the birth is registered, the mother is not married, and the birth can be registered under section 22(3)(b) of the CRA 2004.

The mother must provide a Statutory Declaration CRA 8 to state she has been living apart from the person who was her husband during the 10 months before the birth and this must be accompanied by her decree of divorce dated sometime between the 10 months prior to the birth of the child and the date of the birth being registered.

Once this is provided to the satisfaction of the registrar, the birth can be registered with the usual required declarations being provided by the mother and father.

# Passport applications

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-passports.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-passports.php)

## Consent to passport applications

Where the mother is a sole guardian, only she is required to sign the Passport Application Form. This applies even if the father's name is on the child's birth certificate. The mother will have to sign an affidavit form (AFF1) in the presence of a Commissioner for Oaths (solicitor) stating that she is the sole guardian. The affidavit form can be downloaded from the 'passports' section at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).

Where a child has two guardians the signature of each guardian is required on the Passport Application Form (APS 1E). If a child has more than two guardians, the signatures of no more than two guardians are required on the Passport Application Form (note: a court appointed non-parent guardian, e.g. step-parent, grandparent, may/may not have been granted the right to consent to a passport).

If a guardian refuses to sign the Passport Application Form then the parent/guardian seeking the passport may apply to the local District Court to request the other guardian's consent be dispensed with.

Passport application forms are available online, the Passport Office, garda stations, most post offices.

- Where one or both parents is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen the long form birth certificate or passport of the Irish parent will be required.
- Where neither parent is an Irish citizen there are different requirements depending on the nationality and/or on where the parents live.

For more information about 'Passports for Children'  
See <https://dfa.ie/passports-citizenship/passportsforchildren/>

Only when the father is a joint guardian is his consent required to the passport application for his child.



# If you marry after your baby is born

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-step-parent-adoption.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-step-parent-adoption.php)



## Legal Implications

If both parents of the same child marry each other after the birth, the father, who may not already be a guardian (depending on how long they have cohabited together) becomes a joint guardian of the child. See 'Guardianship' page 2. A married father's guardianship cannot be removed. It is possible to re-register the birth to change the surname of your child where both parents agree. See page 12.

If you marry someone who is **not** the other parent:

- Your spouse has no legal rights to your child. However, it is possible for them to apply for guardianship rights (See page 2).
- New partners of both have the same rights to apply for guardianship rights, provided they meet the other criteria. This is regardless of whether the mother or father are in opposite-sex or same-sex new relationships.
- You can make a will naming your spouse a guardian of your child in the event of your death. This is called Testamentary Guardianship. See page 3.
- It is possible for your spouse to adopt your child. The Adoption Amendments Act 2017 allows for the adoption of a child by their stepparent. For further details contact the Adoption Authority of Ireland or/and TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency at [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)
- Adoption is a serious step as it ends all links between your child and their other biological parent and family. You need to think about it carefully.
- A mother's (both married and unmarried) guardianship can only be removed if she puts the child up for adoption.
- The biological father must be consulted about the adoption of his child even if he is not registered on the birth certificate. If the father is a guardian, his consent is required.

If the biological parents marry each other following the birth, the father will become a joint guardian of their child.

# Shared parenting where parents are living apart

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/target-shared-parenting.php](http://www.treoir.ie/target-shared-parenting.php)

Parents are very special to their children.

It is important for children that, where possible, both parents are involved in the parenting. Children need to know that they have two parents and who their parents are, so that they will have a good sense of their own identity.

## Talk to your children about the other parent

- Be honest and truthful with your child about issues such as:
  - why you are not living with the other parent
  - who the biological father is, if you have a new partner
- Start telling your child early about the family situation and build on this information as you go along.
- Be positive about the other parent - they must have some good points!
- If you can't be positive, be neutral.
- Let your child know they can ask questions about the other parent.

Tell relatives and staff at the crèche/school about your situation and what your child knows. It is important that you are all dealing with the same facts.

## Positive pointers for shared parenting

- Parenting is a job for life and for children there is no such thing as an ex-parent.
- Children recognise the importance of a continuing relationship or link with both parents, no matter how distant or how little the contact.
- Remember that it is not adding people to children's lives but taking important people away that is hard for children to accept.
- Listen well to children – it is important for them to know they are being heard.
- Most important of all, be positive about your children. They are unique and important human beings. A child's confidence and self-esteem blossoms when they hear good things about themselves, and the people close to them.

It is important that your child feels loved by both parents and can feel free to love both of you as parents.

**Children recognise the importance of a continuing relationship or link with both parents, no matter how distant or how little the contact.**



# Mediation



## Mediation allows parents to be in charge of their own decisions.

If you are having difficulty in agreeing parenting issues you might think about mediation. Mediation is where a third party, a mediator, attempts to help parents reach agreement and to work out arrangements concerning their children. Mediation may not be appropriate for every situation.

- Mediation helps parents to be in charge of their own decisions.
- Both parents must be willing to discuss things and to allow for a bit of give and take.
- Mediation promotes good communication and co-operation between parents.
- Parents are helped to remain as partners in parenting.
- An agreement made through mediation can be made a rule of court. This means that it is made legally binding in the same way as a court order.
- It is usually better if parents can reach their own decisions instead of a court making decisions for them.

Find your nearest free-of-charge mediation service listed on [legallaidboard.ie](http://legallaidboard.ie) or phone 01 874 7446.

To access a fee-based mediation service contact the Mediators Institute of Ireland on 01 609 9190 or visit [themii.ie](http://themii.ie)

Dublin Community Mediation provides free mediation to parents, and it is available online to parents who are not based in Dublin.

# Unplanned Pregnancy Support Services

An unplanned pregnancy may leave you feeling worried and confused. You may or may not have many conflicting and strong feelings about your pregnancy.

Unplanned pregnancy counselling can support you to cope with your unplanned pregnancy. It can help to talk to someone who can help support you to find the answers to your questions.

## My Options free phone line

My Options is a HSE freephone line that provides free and confidential information and support to people experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.

### **My Options helpline provides the following supports free of charge:**

- Information on how to access abortion services
- Medical support from an experienced nurse following an abortion
- Listening support for anyone going through an unplanned pregnancy
- Counselling over the phone for you, your partner or other family member

## How to contact My Options:

### **Phone**

Freephone: 1800 828 010

Outside of the Republic of Ireland: 00353 59 916 5066

### **Information and counselling**

Monday to Thursday: 9am to 8pm

Friday: 9am to 7pm

Saturday: 10am to 2pm

### **Medical Support**

Medical support is available on the helpline during and following an abortion 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Irish Sign Language**

Book an appointment through the Irish Remote Interpreting Service to access the service using sign language.

### **Irish Text Relay Service**

This service helps people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired to make and receive calls independently. Book an appointment through Irish Text Relay Service.

### **Information and Webchat:**

[myoptions.ie](http://myoptions.ie)



## Irish Sign Language

Book an appointment to access the service using sign language through Irish Remote Interpreting Service.

If you phone My Options counselling service outside of opening times or if all counsellors are busy, you can leave a message. A counsellor will phone you back during opening times. They will return your call as soon as they can, ideally on the day, but certainly within 24 hours. My Options will attempt to contact you twice.

My Options will support you through an unplanned pregnancy, no matter what option you choose.

## If you or someone you know doesn't speak English

If you don't speak English My Options can provide you with an interpreter. They will help you speak to a My Options counsellor over the telephone in your own language.

My Options can provide an interpreter for 240 different languages. This service is free and confidential. If you would like to speak to a My Options counsellor using an interpreter, call them on freephone 1800 828 010.

You or someone on your behalf will need to:

- tell My Options what language you speak
- give them your phone number



## How My Options can help

My Options helpline can provide you with information and support on all your options, including continued pregnancy supports and abortion services.

They can provide you with counselling over the phone. They can also provide you with information on free face-to-face counselling.  
Freephone 1800 828 010

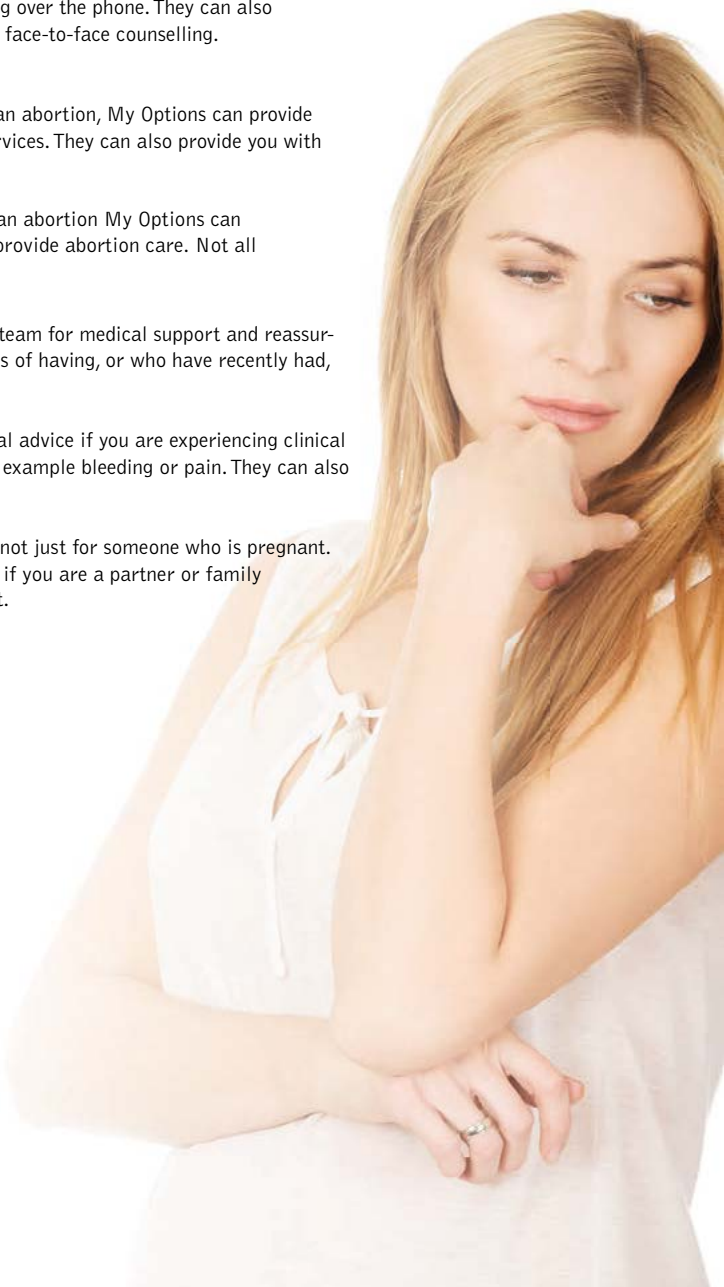
If you decide that you want to have an abortion, My Options can provide you with information on abortion services. They can also provide you with post-abortion support.

If you decide that you want to have an abortion My Options can provide contact details of GPs that provide abortion care. Not all GPs provide abortion care.

My Options provides a 24/7 nursing team for medical support and reassurance to people who are in the process of having, or who have recently had, an abortion.

The nursing team can provide medical advice if you are experiencing clinical symptoms following an abortion, for example bleeding or pain. They can also advise on when to go to a doctor.

Unplanned pregnancy counselling is not just for someone who is pregnant. Speaking with a counsellor can help if you are a partner or family member or someone who is pregnant.



# Money during pregnancy

## If you are not working:

- Make direct contact with your local Social Welfare/Intreo Centre and check what you may be entitled to, for example, Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit.
- Bring your birth certificate with you.

## Apply to your local Intreo Centre\* as you may be entitled to:

- Supplementary Welfare Allowance
- Medical Card / G.P. Visit Card
- Rent Supplement
- Once-off payment for exceptional expenses

\*find your local Intreo Centre at [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

## If you are working:

- You may qualify for Maternity Benefit if you have paid enough Social Insurance Contributions (check with the Maternity Benefit Section). See below.
- You must apply for Maternity Benefit at least 6 weeks before you intend to go on Maternity Leave.
- You may also be entitled to Health and Safety Benefit Leave if there is a risk for you in your work while you are pregnant or breastfeeding and your employer cannot remove the risk or give you alternative risk-free duties.

## How much Maternity Benefit will I get?

If you qualify for Maternity Benefit you will get €299 (from Jan 2026) per week. Some employers will continue to pay an employee in full while on Maternity Leave. Check with your employer.

Maternity Benefit will be taxed. However you will not pay PRSI or Universal Social Charge.

You can get Maternity Benefit for the 26 weeks of Maternity Leave.

If you are already receiving One-Parent Family Payment you may still be entitled to half rate Maternity Benefit if you satisfy the contribution conditions.



### Medical care

Ante-natal care (before birth) and post-natal (after birth) in the public health system is free to all women ordinarily resident in Ireland. Non medical card holders may have to pay some charges.

#### Ante/Post Natal Leave

- You are entitled to take paid time off to attend ante-natal appointments.
- You are entitled to take paid time off to attend one set of ante-natal classes for one pregnancy only.
- You are entitled to take paid time off for medical visits related to the pregnancy for 14 weeks after the birth.
- Fathers are entitled to paid time off to attend two ante-natal classes as a once off, i.e. for one pregnancy only.

### Maternity leave

- You are entitled to Maternity Leave no matter how recently you have started work or how many hours you work per week.
- You are entitled to 26 weeks Maternity Leave.
- You can also take an additional 16 weeks Maternity Leave, but you won't get Maternity Benefit for these extra 16 weeks. See page 20.

### Paternity leave / Benefit

- Fathers and same-sex parents are entitled to two weeks paternity leave and two weeks paternity benefit. This leave can be taken anytime within the first six months of the baby's birth. Paternity benefit will be paid at a rate of €287 per week (Jan 2026), the same as maternity benefit, and will be based on the PRSI contribution requirement.
- For more information visit [www.treoir.ie/information-money.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-money.php)

### Parents Benefit

Parent's Benefit is for parents in the first two years after their child's birth or adoption. You must be on Parent's Leave to get Parent's Benefit. Each parent is entitled to Parent's Benefit during Parent's Leave. Since August 2024, you can take nine consecutive weeks or five separate weeks of leave before your child turns two years old.

### Parental Leave

- A parent is entitled to 26 weeks unpaid parental leave per child. The leave must be taken before the child is 12 years old. The leave maybe broken-up with the agreement of the employer.

For more information on benefits contact:  
Client Eligibility Services on 01 471 5898, [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)

# Money if you are **not** working outside the home following the birth of your baby

## One-Parent Family Payment (OFP)

- You are entitled to One Parent Family payment (OFP) if you have one child below the age of seven, however there are some exceptions to this. The conditions are:
- Have the main care of your child
- Are not cohabiting
- Satisfy the means test - See page 26
- Satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition - See page 33
- The basic rate is €254, and each qualified child rate is €58 for under 12's and €78 for over 12's (from Jan 2026).

Your entitlement to OFP is not affected:

- By having the father's name on the birth certificate
- If you are living at home with your family
- If you are still at school or college.
- If you receive child maintenance from the other parent.

## Jobseeker Transitional Payment JST

If your youngest child is between 7 and 14 years, and you are parenting alone, you can apply for Job seekers transition payment, which is a lone parent family payment. You should check if this payment is the best option for you if you are working, or another option is the working Family payment (see page 26).

## Back to work Family Dividend

Back to work family dividend is a payment to support people coming off social welfare into employment. The payment is paid for two years, the first year you will be paid the child support payment (CSP) for each dependent child at full rate for the first year and half rate for the second year.

## Things you should know about maintenance payments:

- You will not be required to seek maintenance from the liable relative to be eligible for One-Parent Family Payment or Jobseeker's Transitional Payment. Child maintenance is no longer counted as means for any social welfare benefit.
- \* Child maintenance is still counted as means for housing supports such as HAP, RAS, or local authority rent.

**For more information on Rent Supplement see: [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)**



## Other Entitlements

**Child Benefit - €140 per month for each child under 16 years of age or 19 if the child is in full-time education**

### **The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE)**

Children will be able to start ECCE (free pre-school) when they reach 2 years and 8 months of age and continue until they transfer to primary school (provided that they are not older than 5 years and 6 months at the end of the pre-school year). There will be only one entry point to the ECCE scheme from September 2018.

Download the Early Childhood Ireland ECCE Guide for Parents at <https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ECCE-Guide-For-Parents-2022-4.pdf>

The Department of Children supports programmes to help parents access early learning and care, and school-age childcare. Your local childcare committee can inform you of your options. To find out which services offer programmes in your area see: [myccc.ie/i-am-a-parent-information-on-programmes](http://myccc.ie/i-am-a-parent-information-on-programmes)

The website of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has further information on the ECCE scheme.

Newborn baby grant €280 (Jan 2025), so the first child benefit payment will be €420.

## Children with special needs

If your child needs additional support, your pre-school provider can apply, in partnership with you, for targeted supports under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

For further information on this model see:

[www.pobal.ie/programmes/access-and-inclusion-model-aim/](http://www.pobal.ie/programmes/access-and-inclusion-model-aim/)

For advice and support from the Early Years Specialist Service (Access and Inclusion) contact (01) 511 7222 or e-mail: [onlinesupport@pobal.ie](mailto:onlinesupport@pobal.ie)

### You may also qualify for:

- Medical Card / G.P. Visit Card
- Rent Supplement (see page 27)
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) see page 28
- Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance
- Exceptional Needs Payment

**Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA)** is a monthly payment for a child under 16 with a severe disability. The child must require ongoing care and attention substantially above that which is usually required by a child of the same age. From Jan 2026, the monthly allowance is €380, it is not means tested. You can also read the information leaflet for DCA (SW127). The leaflet is available from your Intreo Centre or Citizens Information Service.

**Appeals** - If you think you have been wrongly refused a payment or are unhappy with a decision you have 21 days to lodge an appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

To find a childcare provider near you, contact your local City or County Childcare Committee at: [myccc.ie/i-am-a-parent--information-on-programmes](http://myccc.ie/i-am-a-parent--information-on-programmes)

All payments are subject to the Habitual Residence Condition. See page 33.

# Money if you are working outside the home following the birth of your baby

## One-Parent Family Payment (OFP)

You are entitled to One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) if you:

- Have at least one child below the age of seven.
- Have the main care of your child.
- Are not cohabiting.
- Satisfy the means test - See below.
- Satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition - See page 33.

When your youngest child turns seven you move to Job seekers transition payment (JST).

## Means Test: What counts as means?

### Income

The first €165 of weekly earnings is disregarded – so it won't affect your OFP. Half the remainder of your gross earnings per week (there is no upper cap), is assessed as means.

### Means Test

Working Family Payment – Income thresholds for Working Family Payment will increase by €60 per week for all family sizes from Jan 2026.

### Savings

The first €20,000 is disregarded and the rest is assessed.

## Additional Supports

- You will get **Child Benefit** no matter what you are earning. See page 24.
- A Back to Work Dividend of €58 for a child under 12, and €78 for a child over 12 (Jan 2026), may be available for those coming off OFP into employment.
- You can keep your Medical Card / G.P. Visit Card for 3 years if you have been getting OFP for at least 12 months before taking up work no matter how much you earn.
- The Affordable Childcare Scheme (more details at [affordablechildcare.ie](http://affordablechildcare.ie) and [dcya.gov.ie](http://dcya.gov.ie))
- The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). See page 24.

## Working Family Payment

Working Family Payment is a tax-free weekly supplementary payment. You may qualify if you are working at least 19 hours a week on low pay. The weekly rate of pay depends on your income from employment, your OFP, and how many dependent children you have. From Jan 2026, the income thresholds for WFP will increase by €60, regardless of family size. From Jan 2026, those in receipt of WFP will also be eligible to apply for fuel allowance.



**Rent Supplement** is a means-tested payment for certain people living in private rented accommodation who are unable to pay the cost of their accommodation from their own resources due to unemployment or other circumstances.

## Rent Supplement and Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence referred from Tusla-funded services, An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive (HSE) can get immediate access to Rent Supplement. The mean-test for Rent Supplement will not apply for 3 months.

Rent Supplement can be extended for a further 3 months, but the means-test will apply. After this 6 month period, if the person has a long term housing need, they can apply to their local housing authority for social housing supports and access the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), if eligible.

To apply for Rent Supplement you should contact the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) at your local Community Welfare Service.

## If you are not working

To qualify you must have been renting for six out of the last twelve months, or have been in accommodation for homeless persons for six out of the last twelve months. You must also satisfy the habitual residence condition (see page 33). To apply contact your local Intreo Centre or visit [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

If you qualify for Rent Supplement you must still pay at least €30 a week towards your rent. Couples must pay a minimum of €40. In the past, you could apply for Rent Supplement if you qualified for social housing support and were on a local authority housing list. However, people in this situation should now apply for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) from their local city/county council. For details see [www.hap.ie](http://www.hap.ie)

## Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

RAS is a social housing support introduced to cater for the accommodation needs of persons who are in receipt of long-term rent supplement (usually 18 months or more) For more details on this scheme contact your local authority listed at:

[www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/administration/local-authorities/local-authorities](http://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/administration/local-authorities/local-authorities)



# Other Housing Support

## Housing Assistance Payment

HAP is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities. Under HAP, local authorities will make a monthly payment to a landlord, subject to terms and conditions including rent limits, on a HAP tenant's behalf. In return, the HAP tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the local authority. This 'rent contribution' is based on the household income. It is calculated in the same way as the rent paid by a tenant of a local authority owned property.

## Who is eligible for HAP?

- A household that qualifies for social housing support and who is not currently housed by their local authority.
- Your local authority can determine your eligibility for social housing support and HAP
- To qualify for HAP, a household must be qualified for social housing support by their local authority, which means the household must qualify to go on the local authority housing waiting list.
- HAP tenants must find their own accommodation in the private rented market (this is the same as the current Rent Supplement scheme).
- The landlord must agree to rent their property to the HAP tenant.
- The local authority will make a monthly payment to the landlord. This payment is made on the last Wednesday of each month. The payment is subject to terms and conditions including rent limits, and that the HAP tenant pays their rent contribution to the local authority.
- The HAP tenant pays their rent contribution to the local authority. Rent contributions will generally be made through An Post's Household Budget Scheme. If the HAP tenant does not pay this rent contribution, HAP payments to their landlord will be suspended and eventually stopped. The HAP tenant is then responsible for paying the full rent themselves.



## Appealing a decision

If you are not satisfied with a decision made in relation to Rent Supplement, you should first find out why the decision was made. If you are still dissatisfied you can appeal by emailing [swappeals@welfare.ie](mailto:swappeals@welfare.ie) or via your local Intreo Centre

**For more information on Rent Supplement see: [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)**

**For the Housing Assistance Payment see: [www.hap.ie](http://www.hap.ie)**

It is illegal for a landlord to refuse to take HAP or to discriminate against a person in receipt of HAP.

### **Contacts**

For information on tenant rights contact Threshold:

Freephone: 1800 454 454

Webchat: [threshold.ie](http://threshold.ie)

[www.threshold.ie/advice/help](http://www.threshold.ie/advice/help)

# Income tax / Universal Social Charge

## You are entitled to:

- Your own personal Tax Credit of €2000 from Jan 2025.
- Single Person Child Carer Credit of €1900 from Jan 2025.

\*This tax credit is only available if you are not cohabiting or living with a civil partner/spouse. The tax credit is payable only to the main carer of the child. If the main carer is not working it may be possible to give this credit to the other carer/parent. See [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie).

It is possible to have tax credits back-dated (four years maximum) if they have not been claimed.

You will be taxed at the rate of 20% for the first €39,300 you earn and the rest at 40%. Maternity benefit is taxable.

One Parent Family Payment is taxable. Working Family Payment is not taxable.

If you are the parent or guardian of a child with a disability, you may be eligible to apply for the incapacitated child tax credit, from Jan 2025, this credit is €3800 per year.

## Universal Social Charge (USC)

You will pay a Universal Social Charge on your gross income (income before tax). Income of €13,000 or less is exempt from USC. If your income exceeds this limit you will pay the relevant rate of USC on all your income.

### Standard rate of USC in 2026

- Standard rate of USC in 2026
- Income up to €12,012 will be taxed at 0.5%
- Income between €12,012 and €27,000 is taxed at 2%.
- Income between €27,000 to €70,044 at 4%
- Income over €70,044 is taxed at 8%
- If you have a full medical card, a USC rate of 2% applies to income under €60,000

Social Welfare payments are exempt from the Universal Social Charge.

If you have a full medical card and earn more than €12,012 per year you will pay USC rates of 0.5% on income up to €12,012 and 2% on any income over that amount.





# Opportunities in education and training

## If you are still in secondary school

You are entitled to apply for One-parent Family Payment (OFP) even if you are still at school provided you satisfy the application conditions. View more details at <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d15f58-home-tuition/>

A new single National Childcare Scheme (NCS) has been developed to replace a number of childcare programmes including CETS.

You can find more information on the scheme on [ncs.gov.ie](https://www.ncs.gov.ie). You can read frequently asked questions about the National Childcare Scheme.

You are entitled to a Home Tuition Grant for students on maternity related absences. You may avail of 90 hours of Home Tuition spread over 6 months according to your needs before and after the birth of your baby. You may attend school part-time while availing of the Scheme. View more details on 'Home Tuition Grants' with the Department of Education and Skills at: [www.bit.ly/2YnsPgQ](http://www.bit.ly/2YnsPgQ)

## If you have already left secondary school

If you are aged 15-20 years and did not finish secondary school, Youthreach offers training, work experience and certification up to Leaving Certificate Applied. View more details at <https://www.ddletb.ie/youth/youthreach/>

If you are a parent and getting the Back to Education Allowance, you will receive an Annual Cost of Education Allowance of €500.

If you are a lone parent and are 18 years of age and over and would like to go back and finish secondary school, or attend a community, comprehensive or vocational school, you can switch from OFP (after 3 months). There is no longer a requirement for lone parents aged 18 to be out of education for two years to qualify for BTEA.

If you wish to pursue a third level course, and you are in receipt of OFP or JST, you can apply for back to education allowance BTEA, or stay on your current payment and apply for SUSI, whichever benefits you more.

You cannot apply for the SUSI maintenance grant if you are in receipt of BTEA or VTOS, only the fees grant. For further information on the eligibility criteria for SUSI, please visit <https://www.susi.ie/>

If you are on BTEA you may be entitled to rent supplement. If you are a full-time student on another social welfare payment, you will not qualify for rent supplement.

## Student finance

If you are in receipt of BTEA you can keep your medical card/G.P. visit card and Rent Supplement. View more details on BTEA at <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/418e3f-back-to-education-allowance/>

## Vocational Training Opportunities

If you are over 21 and receiving OFP for 6 months you can apply for a Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). There are no fees, books are free and you may get a small travel allowance and a free child-care place. View more details at [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)

For details of training courses or community employment schemes view: [www.localemploymentservices.ie](http://www.localemploymentservices.ie) and [www.solas.ie](http://www.solas.ie)

### If you are already in third level education

If you are already attending or planning to attend third level education and are in receipt of a social welfare benefit (OFP, BTEA) you may be eligible for a 1916 Bursary of €5000 per year for the duration of the course. If eligible you may receive this in addition to a SUSI grant. Bursaries will be awarded to students (new entrants) who have been identified by participating Higher Education Institutions as meeting the eligibility criteria. At least 20% of the bursaries must be targeted at lone parents.

Who can apply for the 1916 bursary?

- First-time entrants to higher education in approved institutions
- Undergraduate students on NFQ level 6-8, major award courses
- Full or part-time students
- Students from eligible target groups i.e., lone parents, members of the Traveller Community, ethnic minorities, and people with a disability.

View more details at: [www.bit.ly/31byHXq](http://www.bit.ly/31byHXq)

In addition, [www.uversity.org](http://www.uversity.org) offers financial support to individuals 23 years or older who wish to pursue a BA degree in any subject in one of the participating institutions.

## Childcare

There are several subsidised childcare schemes, depending on your circumstances, to support your return to education or training. The level of subsidy and conditions change frequently.

### For up-to-date information view:

The National Childcare Scheme on [ncs.gov.ie](http://ncs.gov.ie). or the Childcare section on <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/5ab17-childcare/>

Dept. of Education  
and Skills  
[www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

Young Parent Support  
Programme  
[www.youngparents.ie](http://www.youngparents.ie)

Education and Training  
Boards Ireland.  
[www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)

The Higher Education  
Authority (HEA)  
[www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie)

# Habitual Residence Condition

Habitual Residence is a condition you must satisfy in order to qualify for certain social welfare payments.

## These payments include:

- Jobseeker's Allowance
- One-Parent Family Payment
- Child Benefit
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance (other than once-off Exceptional and Urgent Needs Payments)

Habitual Residence means you have proven close links to Ireland or other parts of the Common Travel Area\*. The most important factors for providing this link are:

- Length and continuity of residence in Ireland or elsewhere
- The length and purpose of any absence from Ireland
- Nature and pattern of employment
- Main centre of interest
- Future intentions

\*The Common Travel Area is Ireland, Great Britain, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

## EU Regulations and Habitual Residence

EU/EEA citizens and Swiss nationals who are employed or self-employed in Ireland and subject to the Irish Social Insurance system do not have to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition to qualify for Family Benefits. The following Irish social welfare payments are regarded as Family Benefits under EU Regulations

- One-Parent Family Payment
- Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)
- Working Family Payment
- Child Benefit
- Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE)

**Habitual Residence is a condition which you must satisfy in order to qualify for certain social welfare payments.**



For information see <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/170e70-habitual-residence-condition/>



# Child abduction

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information/abduction.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information/abduction.php)



It is an offence for any person including a parent or guardian to take or send a child under 16 years out of the State:

- (a) in defiance of a court order or
- (b) without the consent of each person who is a guardian or
- (c) without the consent of a person to whom custody of the child has been granted by a court, unless the court grants permission.

The consent of a parent who is not a guardian is not required. However, if that parent has applied to court for guardianship, and a summons has been served, the child cannot be taken out of the country unless the court grants permission.

In a situation where a child is removed within Ireland contact your local Gardaí. In general, these situations will be dealt with in your local District Court as part of custody/access proceedings.

For further information contact your local Garda station and/or the Central Authority for Child Abduction in the Department of Justice and Equality

**It is an offence for a parent or guardian to take a child under 16 years out of the State without the consent of the other Guardian or in defiance of a court order.**

# Domestic violence

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-domestic-violence.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-domestic-violence.php)

Domestic violence can be physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and financial abuse. It can happen to anyone at any time. If you are being abused or think you are being abused, you are not alone. It is not your fault and help is available. You can contact your local gardaí, Women's Aid, Safe Ireland, Men's Aid and/or your local refuge. Remember, it is important to talk to someone you trust be it a friend, a family member, or your local garda. All of the orders listed below are available to opposite and same sex people – you do not have to live with someone (cohabit) to get an order. Victims of Domestic violence now have a legal right to five days paid leave from work if they need to take time off work because of the abuse, this is covered under the work life balance and miscellaneous provisions Act 2023.

## Barring Order

- You can apply for a barring order if your partner is being violent towards you. No minimum period of cohabitation is required.
- A barring order requires the violent person to leave the family home, unless that person owns the family home in full or has greater rights than you to the home.
- A barring order can last up to 3 years and can be renewed.
- You may also apply for an **interim barring order** or **emergency barring order** where there are reasonable grounds for believing that you are at an immediate risk of significant harm and the granting of a protection order would not offer sufficient protection (see below). Unlike an interim barring order, the emergency barring order applicant does not have to satisfy the property test to be able to get an emergency barring order. This means the person applying for the order does not need to own, co-own or have their name on the lease of the property. They both last a maximum of 8 working days.

## Safety Order

- A parent can apply for a safety order if you need protection from the other parent whether you have ever lived with them or not.
- A safety order prohibits the violent person from further acts of violence or threats of violence.
- It does not oblige that person to leave the family home.
- A safety order can last up to 5 years and can be renewed.

## Protection Order

- You can apply for a protection order while you are waiting for the court to decide on your application for either a safety or barring order.
- A protection order prohibits the violent person from further acts of violence or threats of violence. It does not require the violent person to leave the home.
- This is a temporary order but will have immediate effect.

If you get any of the above court orders and the violent person breaks it, then the Gardaí can arrest and charge that person. To apply for an order you must go to your local District Court office (see Courts Service below). Incidents of domestic violence can be reported at your local Garda Station.

Local Garda Station  
[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)

Courts Service  
Dolphin House  
01 888 6355  
[www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)

Women's Aid  
Freephone: 1800 341 900  
Email: [helpline@womensaid.ie](mailto:helpline@womensaid.ie)

Could you be in an abusive relationship? See [toointoyou.ie](http://toointoyou.ie).

Cuan, the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) Agency

34-37 Clarendon Street,  
Dublin 2, D02DE61  
Email: [info@cuanagency.ie](mailto:info@cuanagency.ie)  
+353 1 602 8357  
[www.gov.ie/cuan](http://www.gov.ie/cuan)

Men's Aid

Support for male victims of domestic violence  
01 5543811  
Email: [hello@mensaid.ie](mailto:hello@mensaid.ie)

For a list of support services around the country see: [www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)



# Harassment

for more information see: [www.treoir.ie/information-harassment.php](http://www.treoir.ie/information-harassment.php)



## It is an offence to harass a person

### Harassment

Harassment may be as a result of persistent communication with a person, but it can now also be persistent communication about a person, sometimes referred to as indirect harassment. This offence will carry a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment to reflect the serious nature of harassment and the wide range of behaviours it represents.

The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 was brought into force in February 2021. The Act amends the law relating to harassment and creates new offences to deal with the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, both online and offline provides anonymity for the victims of those offences.

Section 28 4(c) of the Criminal Justice (miscellaneous provisions) Act 2023 allows a court to impose an exclusion order on a person suspected of stalking, which covers the victims home, education, and workplace.

# Coercive Control

Coercive Control is a persistent pattern of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour including all or some forms of domestic abuse (emotional, physical, financial, sexual including threats) by a boyfriend/girlfriend, partner, husband/wife or ex-partner.

This can have a serious impact including the fear of violence, cause serious alarm and distress and can result in a person giving up work, changing their routines, losing contact with family and friends. Coercive control can damage a person's physical and emotional well-being.

Coercive control can be difficult to detect from the outside looking into a relationship, so too can it be hard to spot when in the relationship itself. As the behaviour worsens and each iteration of abuse becomes a new normal, low self-esteem is just one of the many factors that can stop victims from seeing the reality of their situation.

## **Since January 2019 coercive control is a criminal offence.**

The following types of behaviour are common examples of coercive control:

- isolating you from your friends and family
- controlling how much money you have and how you spend it
- monitoring your activities and your movements
- repeatedly putting you down, calling you names or telling you that you are worthless
- threatening to harm or kill you or your child
- threatening to publish information about you or to report you to the gardaí or the authorities
- damaging your property or household goods

**If any of these issues affect you, and you need to talk to someone, you can reach Women's Aid at 1800 341 900 or at [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie), and Men's Aid at 01 5543811 or at [www.mensaid.ie](http://www.mensaid.ie). For your Local Garda Station see [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)**

# The Young Parents Support Programme

## What Is The Young Parents Support Programme?

The Young Parents Support Programme - YPSP for short - is a family support service for young people who are pregnant or parenting. Support is also available for partners and those family members who play an important part in your life. This support service is free and confidential. Young parents can be supported through the YPSP.



There are 17 YPSP project locations across Ireland available to young parents as follows:

- Carlow/ Kilkenny
- Clare
- Cork
- Donegal
- Dublin West & Dublin North
  - Coolock
  - Finglas
  - Blanchardstown
- Dublin South
  - Ballyfermot/Bluebell/Inchicore
  - Clondalkin
- Dublin Southwest
- Galway
- Kildare
- Limerick
- Louth
- Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan
- Westmeath/Longford
- Wexford

## How Can I Contact The YPSP?

You can contact the YPSP directly or anyone interested in your well-being, or the well-being of your child, may make contact on your behalf.

## How Does The YPSP Work?

A project worker will meet you to discuss your needs and concerns and will support you to deal with them as far as possible. You can meet the project worker on your own, as a couple, with a member of your family or with anyone who is supporting you. Meetings may take place in your own home, at the YPSP office or wherever you feel comfortable. You will be supported in a way that best suits your individual needs and the needs of your child. This may be on a one-to-one basis, through group activities or by putting you in contact with other sources of support.

## What Kind Of Support Will I Get?

The type of support you will get will depend on your own individual needs and the needs of your child.

For example, you may need:

- to talk about how your pregnancy is affecting you and your relationships with those around you - such as the other parent of your child and your own parents
- support to take care of yourself and your baby both before and after the birth
- help to adjust to your new roles and responsibilities as a parent
- help to understand how your child is developing and what you can do to make sure he or she is healthy, happy and safe
- information about your rights and responsibilities as a father or a mother
- information and support about your welfare rights and entitlements including accommodation
- encouragement and support to remain in or return to education/training - if that is your choice
- support as a young father to get your rights in relation to your child and to have contact with them
- contact with other young parents in your area.

The YPSP project worker will know the other supports and services for parents like you in your area and, if you wish, can put you in touch with them, talk to them on your behalf or introduce you to them.

# Kinship Care Ireland

Kinship Care is when a child or young person is cared for by a relative or family friend, because they are not able to live with their parents. If you are a grandparent, aunt, uncle, older brother, or sister, relative or family friend, who is raising a child who is unable to live with their parents, you are a kinship carer.

Most children are in the care of their relatives or family network, because their parents are unable, or unavailable to care for them, due to circumstances such as parental drug or alcohol misuse, imprisonment, parental physical or mental health issues. Kinship care can also arise from the death of a parent. As such, children and young people in kinship care have often experienced early trauma, adversity or loss and may need specific supports to help them to thrive.

Kinship Care can be part of a formal arrangement, where a relative is 'fostering' the child, or informal, when the family member or friend steps in voluntarily, perhaps because Social Workers ask for them to be part of a 'private family arrangement'.

When you become a Kinship Carer, as well as building a positive, nurturing relationship with the children and young people in your care, you will need to carefully consider the responsibilities involved and the potential effects on your household, of supporting additional family members.

Depending on how your kinship family is formed, there are different routes through which to secure your legal relationship with and responsibility for the children and young people in your care, to ensure that their rights can be exercised and protected.

To seek access to legal advice and/or representation, see:  
[www.legalaidboard.ie/en/contact-us/find-a-law-centre/](http://www.legalaidboard.ie/en/contact-us/find-a-law-centre/)

For information on formal kinship care (relative foster care) contact the Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA): <https://ifca.ie/> or call 01 459 9474

Currently there are limited financial supports for kinship carers. Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to parents or guardians of children under 16 years of age, or up to 19 years of age if the child is in full-time education or full-time training or has a disability that prevents them from supporting themselves.

You may also be eligible for other interim, means-tested payments through your local Intreo office, such as the Child Support Payment or Supplementary Welfare Allowance. Contact your local Intreo office for further information and to check your eligibility.

If you are caring for a child fulltime without input from their parent(s) you may be eligible to the Guardian's payment. This is a weekly social welfare payment of €237 to support meeting a child's caring needs, up to the age of 18 or 22 if young adult is in fulltime education.

For more information on the Guardian's Payment, see:  
[www.gov.ie/en/service/709bab-guardians-payment/](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/709bab-guardians-payment/)



Kinship Care, based in Treoir provides information and support to kinship carers and to those who work closely with kinship families.

**Contact Kinship Care Ireland in Treoir**

Call landline: 01 6700120 Email: [info@kinshipcare.ie](mailto:info@kinshipcare.ie) Web: [www.kinshipcare.ie](http://www.kinshipcare.ie)

# Useful contacts



## **The Adoption Authority of Ireland**

01 230 9300  
www.aai.gov.ie

## **Barnardos National Office (M)\***

01 453 0355  
Email: info@barnardos.ie  
www.barnardos.ie

## **Childhood Matters**

Pre and post natal accommodation and support  
021 – 4357730  
Website: www.childhood-matters.ie  
Email: mtwomey@childhood-matters.ie

## **Citizens Information Phone Service**

LoCall 0818 074000  
Email: information@citizeninformation.ie

## **Clarecare, Clare (M)\***

Family Support  
Ennis  
Tel: 065 6894200

## **CYPSC**

Children and Young People's Services Committee  
EnSupport for families with Children in Care - Limericknis  
Tel: 061 314111

## **Department of Social Protection**

Tel: 01 7043000

## **Doras Bui, Dublin 17 (M)\***

A parents alone resource centre  
01 848 4811  
Email: info@dorasbui.ie  
www.dorasbui.ie

## **Family Life Centre, Boyle**

071 966 3000  
Email: info@familylifecentre.ie  
www.familylifecentre.ie

## **Familibase**

Support for families in Dublin 10 (M)\*  
01 654 6800 Email: info@familibase.ie  
www.facebook.com/FamilIBase.

## **Family Mediation Service**

01 874 7446  
See www.legalaidboard.ie to find your local mediation service.

## **Focus Ireland (Housing)**

Dublin 01 881 5900  
Cork 021 427 3646  
Kilkenny 056 779 4565  
Limerick 061 405300  
Sligo 071 915 6874  
Waterford 051 879 810  
www.focusireland.ie

## **FLAC ( Free Legal Advice Centre)**

01 906 1010  
www.flac.ie

## **Foróige (M)\***

National youth organisation  
01 630 1560  
Email: info@foroige.ie  
www.foroige.ie

## **HSE Sexual Health Programme**

www.sexualwellbeing.ie

## **HSE National Information Service**

LoCall 1800 700 700  
01 240 8787  
www.hse.ie

## **Immigrant Council of Ireland, Dublin 2**

01 674 0200  
www.immigrantcouncil.ie

## **Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)**

01 230 3536  
Email: iacp@iacp.ie  
www.iacp.ie

## **Kinship Care Ireland**

01 6700120  
Email: info@kinshipcare.ie  
www.kinshipcare.ie

## **Legal Aid Board**

Head Office: 066 947 1000  
Dublin Office: 01 646 9600  
Email: info@legalaiddboard.ie

## **Limerick Social Services Council, (M)\***

061 314 111  
Email: info@lssc.ie  
www.lssc.ie

## **Men's Aid, Dublin (M)\***

01 5543811  
Email: hello@mensaid.ie

## **MABS (Money Advice & budgeting Service)**

LoCall: 0818 072000  
www.@mabs.ie

## **Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)**

083 0755 387  
info@mrci.ie

## **My Options Freephone Line**

Freephone: 1800 828 010  
Outside of the Republic of Ireland + 353 59 913 8175  
www.myoptions.ie

### **National Infertility Support and Information Group (NISIG)**

Provides support, information and advocacy for all those on their fertility journey  
Helpline: 087 7975058 (text anytime)  
Email: [contact@nisig.com](mailto:contact@nisig.com)  
Website: [www.nisig.com](http://www.nisig.com) - live webchat Monday and Thursday evenings. Monthly peer support meetings - see our social media for dates (Twitter and Instagram @NISIG)

### **One Family, Dublin 7**

01 662 9212  
Email: [info@onefamily.ie](mailto:info@onefamily.ie)

### **Rainbows, Dublin 12 (M)\***

Peer support groups for children affected by bereavement, divorce or separation of someone close to them. Ages 7-18.  
Rainbows National Office 01 473 4175  
Email: [ask@rainbowsireland.com](mailto:ask@rainbowsireland.com)  
[www.rainbowsireland.ie](http://www.rainbowsireland.ie)

### **Ringsend and Irishtown Community Centre (M)\***

016604789  
Email: [theoffice@ricc.ie](mailto:theoffice@ricc.ie)  
[www.ricc.ie](http://www.ricc.ie)

### **Solas**

Further Education and Training Authority  
01 533 2500  
Email: [info@solas.ie](mailto:info@solas.ie)  
[www.solas.ie](http://www.solas.ie)

### **St. Brigid's Family & Community Centre Waterford**

051 375 261  
Email: [info@stbrigidsfrc.ie](mailto:info@stbrigidsfrc.ie)  
[www.stbrigidsfcc.ie](http://www.stbrigidsfcc.ie)

### **St. Anne's Day Nursery, Cork (M)\***

021 432 3304  
Email: [manager@stannesdaynursery.ie](mailto:manager@stannesdaynursery.ie)

### **St. Catherine's Community Services**

St Catherines, Carlow  
059 913 8700  
Email: [info@catherines.ie](mailto:info@catherines.ie)  
[www.catherines.ie](http://www.catherines.ie)

### **Threshold (Housing)**

National Advice Service 1800 454 454  
[www.threshold.ie](http://www.threshold.ie)

### **The Doula Association of Ireland**

Promoting support from skilled doulas.  
W: [www.doula.ie](http://www.doula.ie)  
P: 085 834 7028

### **Treoir, Dublin 1**

National Information Service for unmarried parents  
28 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1,  
D01 HY 46 01 6700 120  
Email: [info@treoir.ie](mailto:info@treoir.ie)  
[www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

### **North Barnardos Wexford & Enniscorthy**

053 923 6342

## **Young Parent Support Programme**

### **National Programme Manager**

28 North Great Georges Street  
Dublin 1  
01 670 0120 or 087 251 8428  
Email: [sam@ypsp.ie](mailto:sam@ypsp.ie)  
[www.youngparents.ie](http://www.youngparents.ie)  
The YPSP offers support to pregnant and parenting young people and is available in the following locations:

**Carlow / Kilkenny** 059 913 8700

**Clare** 086 0270 899

**Cork** 087 344 4218

**Donegal** 086 606 4291

### **Dublin**

**Ballyfermot, Bluebell & Inchicore** 086 795 4814

**Clondalkin** 086 772 8619

**Coolock** 087 036 7923 or 0870367923

**Dublin 15 North** 083 443 8861

**Dublin South West** 086 772 8619

**Finglas** 01 8641480

**Galway** 085 763 3243

**Limerick** 086 602 0588

**Louth – Drogheda** 041 984 2078

**Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan** 087 791 7000

**Kildare** 086 203 1882

**Westmeath/Longford** 086 818 9874

**Wexford** 086 060 0582

### **Womens Aid**

1800 341 900  
Phone: 01 6788858  
Email: [helpline@womensaid.ie](mailto:helpline@womensaid.ie)  
Other useful addresses are listed throughout the booklet.

### **ARC Family Resource Centre (M)\***

Support for families in Adamstown, Raheen, Clonroche, in Wexford.  
Phone: 051 442888  
Website: [www.arcfrc.ie](http://www.arcfrc.ie)  
Email: [hello@arcfrc.ie](mailto:hello@arcfrc.ie)

For local information contact your local Citizens Information Centre, Health Service Executive or Youth Information Centre.

Other useful addresses are listed throughout the booklet.

For local information contact your local Citizens Information Centre, Health Service Executive or Youth Information Centre.

**\*(M) Member agency of Treoir**

## Treoir Information Leaflets

Guardianship	Birth registration
Access and custody	Passport applications
Rights of unmarried fathers	International Child Abduction
Cohabiting parents	Shared parenting
Maintenance	Explaining family relationships
Establishing paternity / DNA Testing	Step-parent adoption
You are a Kinship Carer	Female Same Sex Couples and Donor Assisted Reproduction
Information Booklet	

Funded by the HSE Sexual Health Programme

All publications can be downloaded from [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)  
or order from Treoir 01 670 0120  
[info@treoir.ie](mailto:info@treoir.ie) (free of charge)  
[www.treoir.ie/media/publications/leaflet-order-form/](http://www.treoir.ie/media/publications/leaflet-order-form/)



### **My Options**

HSE led My Options is a Freephone line and webchat service that provides free and confidential information and counselling to people experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. My Options also provides post abortion counselling.

[www.myoptions.ie](http://www.myoptions.ie)



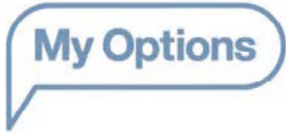
My Options

### **Busy Bodies Booklet**

Information for 5th and 6th class students on the physical and emotional changes during puberty.

To order any of the above resources visit [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)





**The HSE Sexual Health Programme implements a strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland. For more information, visit [www.myoptions.ie](http://www.myoptions.ie).**

**The opinions/views outlined in this document are not necessarily the opinions/views of the HSE Sexual Health Programme.**

**This publication is funded by the HSE Sexual Health Programme.**



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## March 2026

While every effort has been made to ensure information provided in this information pack is correct no responsibility can be accepted by Treoir for any omissions or errors.



**TÚSLA** An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

