

PATHWAYS



- MOVING FORWARD
- MONEY MATTERS
- MY RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES
- MY NEW HOME
- EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- EMPLOYMENT
- STAYING SAFE
- PARENTHOOD
- MIND, BODY AND SOUL

© 2012 Focus Ireland, EPIC and Empower Ireland

Published by
EPIC, Focus Ireland and Empower Ireland

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from EPIC, Focus Ireland and Empower Ireland.

Designed by: normandesign



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	12
MOVING FORWARD	15
Preparation for Leaving Care	16
Needs Assessment	16
Preparation for Leaving Care Plan	16
Leaving Care	17
Aftercare Plan	17
Aftercare	18
The Checklist for Aftercare	19
The Important Things to Remember	20
Money Matters	23
Budgeting	23
Top Tips to Making Your Own Budget	23
Banking	26
Credit Unions	28
Borrowing	28
Loans	29
Credit Cards	29
Prepay Credit Cards	29
Overdrafts	30



CONTENTS

Get Support	30
Financial Entitlements	31
The Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) Scheme	32
The Important Things to Remember	33
My Rights and Responsibilities	37
Your Entitlement to Aftercare	37
Your Right To Have Your Say — Voting	38
Your Right to Access Your Personal Information	39
Other rights	40
Protecting Your Rights	40
Discrimination and Equality	40
Seeking Legal Advice/Aid	41
Your Rights and Responsibilities if Stopped by the Gardaí	43
MY NEW HOME	49
Where Will I live?	49
Semi-independent Accommodation	50
Transitional	50
Supported Lodgings	50
Private Rented Accommodation	51
Bills Bills Bills	53
Settling in Costs — Time to Shop	56



CONTENTS

Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities	57
Repairs	58
Standards	58
Rent Increases	59
Moving Out	59
Financial Assistance	61
Rent Supplement	61
Living Allowance	62
Fuel Allowance	62
Household Budget Scheme	63
Homelessness	64
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	73
Pathways Back into Education and Training	74
Education Options	76
Adult Literacy Courses	77
Community Training Centres	78
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)	78
Apprenticeships	79
Local Employment Schemes/Job Clubs	79
Third-Level Education	80
Financial Support	80



CONTENTS

Student Assistance Fund	81
Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)	81
Maintenance Grant	82
Fund for Students with Disabilities	82
EMPLOYMENT	87
Applying for a job	87
Tips for Making Your CV	88
References	89
Becoming a Volunteer	92
Starting Work	94
Paying Tax	95
Types of Income Tax	96
Employment Rights	98
Working Part-Time	99
Unemployment Information	99
STAYING SAFE	105
At Home	105
Out and About	107
Phone and Online Safety	109
Staying Safe in a Relationship	110
Getting Help	111



CONTENTS

Drugs and alcohol 112

Getting Help 118

PARENTHOOD 125

Crisis Pregnancy Programme 126

Becoming a Parent — Who Will be There to Help You? 127

Pregnancy — Drinking and Smoking 129

‘Baby Blues’ 130

Breastfeeding 131

Top Tips for New Dads 133

Financial and Workplace Entitlements 134

Time off work 135

Financial Entitlements for Parents and Families 135

Special Entitlements for Lone Parents 136

Handling Parenting 137

Rights of Unmarried Fathers Explained 139

Parenting and Family Support 140

MIND, BODY AND SOUL 147

Mind 147

Body 150

Healthy Diet 150

Exercise 152



CONTENTS

Medical Help	154
Sexual Health	155
Popular Types of Contraception	155
Sexually Transmitted Infections/Diseases (STIs)	159
Soul	163
Getting Involved in Your Local Community	167
SIMPLE RECIPES	176
CONTACT PAGES	178
Notes (Answer to Quiz)	185



INTRODUCTION

FROM YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS GUIDE:

The following is an aftercare guide that has been created for young people who are preparing to leave care by young people who have left care. Within this guide there are full and detailed sections telling you everything you need to know for leaving care and assisting you towards finding a place of your own. Those of us who have made this transition before have shared our experience through the consultation in the early stages of preparing this guide. Professionals from the agencies who have for many years worked with care leavers also contributed their experiences gained from supporting young people during this exciting and sometimes scary time.

While these consultations were taking place we went through each section and made sure that our views and opinions were taken into consideration, including how it is worded, what type of graphics are used (colour, layout, covering) and of course what type of information it should contain.

It was very important for the creation of this guide to have our input valued and considered. We have the direct experience of leaving care and therefore we are the experts on what young people need.



INTRODUCTION

FROM ADULTS INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS GUIDE:

This journey you are embarking on will ultimately lead to you having your own space, a place you can call 'my home', rather than what for some of you may have been a place called 'a home'. It is hoped that this guide will assist you in successfully reaching that goal and take some of the stress out of it along the way. Throughout this guide there are tips and suggestions about a whole range of things, because finding a place to live is just one very important part of setting up a home. Just as important is developing a sense of belonging and this requires more than just a roof over your head. Remember: the people in your life can be just as important as the place in your life and a good friend can be priceless.

It is the hope of all involved in the preparation of this guide that it will assist you on the pathway to independence and a happy and fulfilling life, which you and every young person deserves, for you are the future of Ireland.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

12

The organisations involved in the compilation and writing of this guide would like to extend their sincere thanks and gratitude to everyone who helped along the way.

If there is anything about the guide that you think could be better or some piece of information which we've left out which you think should be there, just let us know and it can go in when we update the guide in the near future.

Moving Forward

“Every day do something that
will inch you closer to a better
tomorrow. (Doug Firebaugh)”



MOVING FORWARD

The aim of Aftercare Services is to work with young people in preparing to leave care. This is carried out by supporting, advising and advocating for you as you make the transition from living in foster or residential care to independent living, with the same opportunities as other young people your age. It is important for you to have a personalised plan of action and to get the help and support to create an action plan that meets your needs. You should know that people leaving care and learning to live independently do this at different rates and times — there's no one 'right way' or time schedule for everyone!

15

There is a National Aftercare Policy, which had been drawn up and agreed by the HSE when this guide was being produced. What this means for you is that you are **entitled** to an aftercare service, if you have a need for it, and that need has been identified through an assessment. The types of aftercare services you can avail of can be very different in different parts of the country. The availability of aftercare services might also change over time, so for the most up-to-date information, you can speak to your aftercare worker or social worker about it, or check the online version of this guide on the EPIC website (www.epiconline.ie).

It's important for you to know that aftercare work is done a little differently depending on which Health Service Executive (HSE) area you live in. For example, the age at which your aftercare work begins can vary. If you are unsure about the situation in your area speak to your social worker.

There are several steps that should be taken before you leave care to help you to prepare for the future.

PREPARATION FOR LEAVING CARE

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first step is to complete a needs assessment. This assessment gives you and your social worker, key worker or aftercare worker the opportunity to identify areas you need particular help and support in. This involves filling in a needs assessment form. Once the needs assessment has been completed, a Preparation for Leaving Care Plan is drawn up.

PREPARATION FOR LEAVING CARE PLAN

This plan becomes a crucial part of your care plan for the remainder of your time in care. It will be reviewed at regular intervals. This plan will ensure that you are given the opportunity to develop a range of independent living skills and help you to prepare emotionally for moving on. It sets out tasks and responsibilities to be completed by you, your carer and aftercare support services as part of the process of leaving care. For example: help managing money and budgeting, cooking, filling out forms and paying bills.

The role of the aftercare worker is to prepare you for independent living and to support you once you have left care. However, it remains the responsibility of your social worker to look after your welfare whilst you are in care. An aftercare worker may be assigned to you sometime after your 16th birthday. They will work with you, your social worker, carers and all relevant professionals to ensure that the needs identified and the tasks set out in your Preparation for Leaving Care Plan are completed. If you are not assigned an aftercare worker then your social worker should take on this role.

To-do

- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____



LEAVING CARE

Your Preparation for Leaving Care Plan should commence at age 16 and should be reviewed before your 18th birthday. At this point your aftercare worker should begin developing your plan for aftercare. The plan will build on the needs that have already been identified as well as any new ones that may have arisen.

AFTERCARE PLAN

This plan will also lay out tasks and responsibilities to be completed as part of the process of leaving care. Here are some examples of the type of areas that may be looked at in your plan depending on your needs:

- Health care needs.
- What accommodation is available in your area?
- Helping you to access education, training or employment.
- Financial issues e.g. how you will provide for yourself financially when you leave care?
- Support by other organisations (e.g. what supports will be available for you once you leave care and what other supports need to be put in place?).

AFTERCARE

As you make the move from living in care to living independently, your needs will change. For this reason your Aftercare Plan should be reviewed every 6 months while you and your social worker or aftercare worker are working together.

HERE IS AN IDEA OF WHAT YOU MIGHT LOOK AT:

- How you are getting on in your current accommodation?
- How are your current and future accommodation needs being met?
- Any additional supports you may need and how these will be delivered.
- Any areas you are particularly concerned about and how these concerns may be addressed.
- Concerns of other involved professionals.
- Whether the tasks laid out in your Aftercare Plan are being achieved and how best to achieve them.
- Whether you, your aftercare worker and other relevant support services are living up to their responsibilities.

Depending on your particular living arrangements, you may receive different kinds of aftercare support. Some young people live in supported accommodation and have a keyworker and staff available. Other young people live in supported lodgings, their own flat and transitional housing, where an aftercare worker will keep in contact by phone and visit at intervals to see how they are getting on and to provide appropriate support. See the section on 'My New Home' for more details on living options after you leave care.

THE CHECKLIST FOR AFTERCARE:

To do	Complete
Needs Assessment	
Preparation for Leaving Care Plan	
Aftercare Plan	

Usually, your **Aftercare Plan** will support you until you turn 21 years of age, if you need support till then. If you continue in full-time education, you should be able to get the financial support you need until you finish your education. The important thing to remember is that your Aftercare Plan will work best, and have the most positive results for you, if you become involved in the planning of it with your social worker, aftercare worker and carers. While you have the right to aftercare services, it's your choice to take part. Your Aftercare Plan will be designed to help you make an easy transition to independence, and that means you have responsibilities, too. But even if you choose not to take part in aftercare support to begin with, you can change your mind at any time up until you turn 21 years of age. You can do this by contacting your social worker or by getting in touch with EPIC.

19



THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1. Who can you talk to if unsure about moving forward?

2. At what age should you meet your aftercare worker?

3. Why is a Preparation for Leaving Care Plan important for you?

4. From reading this section what would you like to have in your Preparation for Leaving Care Plan or Aftercare Plan?

5. At what intervals should your Aftercare Plan be reviewed?

Money Matters

“**Never spend your money before
you have it. (Thomas Jefferson)**”



Money Matters

MONEY MATTERS

23

Earning your own money is a big part of gaining independence. Keeping your money safe and learning how to manage it are very important lifelong skills to develop. It can be tricky to get the hang of at first but with practice it soon becomes second nature.

BUDGETING

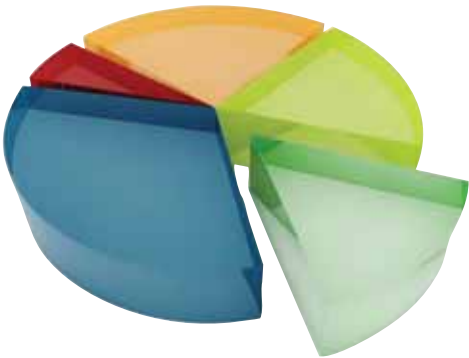
Budgeting is an essential skill to learn when you're supporting yourself. It is a way to make sure you have enough money for what you need, and hopefully to have some left over for the things you want! It can take a while to get used to it if you've never had to worry about paying bills before or buying all your own food. But once you have your own home, it is your responsibility to make sure you have enough money to cover all the costs. But don't worry, it's not that hard once you plan ahead a bit and hopefully some of the advice and information in this chapter will help you do just that.

TOP TIPS TO MAKING YOUR OWN BUDGET

- Take note of your weekly or monthly income.
- Decide whether to make a weekly or monthly budget (depending on how often you get paid/collect social welfare/ receive payments).

Money Matters

- Include everything and make your budget fit your life, for example cigarettes, hair dye, match tickets.
- Be realistic — your rent and bills ALWAYS need to be paid first. It can be tempting on payday to go and buy the trainers you’ve wanted or get your hair done, but you’ll regret it later and it could lead to much more serious problems down the road. If you are having problems, take steps quickly.
- You should be spending less money than you have coming in. If you’re strapped for cash, looking at the following lists will help you see where you can cut back (while still paying for essentials). If on the other hand you’re spending less than your income, well done!



SAMPLE WEEKLY BUDGET

Weekly Income	€
Social Welfare	
Back to Education Allowance	
Wages	
Any Other Income	
TOTAL	€

Money Matters

Weekly Expenditure	€
Rent	
Electricity	
Heating	
Food	
Loan Repayments	
Telephone	
TV Licence	
Mobile	
Petrol	
Bus/Train Ticket	
Medication	
Toiletries	
Clothes	
Lottery	
Entertainment	
Other	
Once-Off Expenditure	€
Doctor's Appointment	
Gifts	
Haircut	
Home/Car Repairs	
Any Other Expenditure	
TOTAL	€
Total Income	€
Total Expenditure	€

TOP TIPS FOR SPENDING LESS AND SAVING MORE



- Put aside a little money each week/payday so you're never caught out when something unexpected comes up.
- Ask yourself when buying something:
Do I need this . . . or just want it?
- Shop around to get the cheapest prices.
- Take advantage of special offers.
- Shop in the sales, but don't buy something just because it's a good price — will you actually use it?
- Use public transport, walk or cycle instead of taking the car (if you're lucky enough to have one!).
- Spend some nights in with friends instead of going out.
- Don't go food shopping when you're hungry.
- Freeze left-overs.
- Avoid take-aways (except as a treat now and then).
- Open a savings account to encourage yourself to save.

BANKING

BANK ACCOUNT

If you don't already have a bank account you'll need to open one. When you get a job your wages will usually be paid directly into a bank account. Rent can also be paid by what's called a standing order or direct debit. This means the money will come straight out of your bank account each month and into your landlord's bank account. If you have a bank account you can apply for loans. You might also open a special account for savings to help you manage your money.

Money Matters

You should open an account with a bank that has a branch in your area so you always have easy access to your money and a person to speak to directly if you need advice. There are different types of bank accounts so go along to your local bank branch to discuss which one is best for you.

You should go to your local bank branch in person. You can't open an account over the phone or online.

You must be aged over 18 to open your own current account.

TO OPEN A BANK ACCOUNT YOU WILL NEED:

2 forms of ID: One of them must be a photo ID
(passport, driving licence)

Proof of address
(a bill with your name on it)

Your PPS number
(contact the Department of Social Protection if you are not sure what your number is)

27



CREDIT UNIONS

Credit unions are a bit like banks but are generally run as not-for-profit, community-based institutions. To join a credit union you just open an account and make a minimum deposit. Credit unions provide loans based on how much you have saved in your account

BORROWING

Before you decide to borrow, ask yourself:

- Can you save enough money to buy/pay for what you need rather than getting a loan?
- Can you afford to pay back your loan while still paying for essentials?
- If you decide you do need a loan, making a budget and sticking to it could help you to save money and reduce the amount you need to borrow.
- Usually you need to be employed full-time to borrow money, or else have a member of your family become the ‘guarantor’. That means if you can’t pay the money back, the guarantor will become responsible for the loan.

The Importance of Credit History

If you have ever used credit before (received a loan, had a credit card) you will have what’s called a credit history.

Banks and other institutions, like credit unions, will check your credit history when deciding if they will give you a loan. If you have not paid back past debts or took too long to pay them back, it may affect whether you get a loan/credit in the future. Having bad credit history doesn’t mean you will be automatically refused a loan but it can make things more difficult and you will have to prove to lenders that you can be trusted.

LOANS

Banks, credit unions and building societies all offer loans to their customers. Not everyone will be given a loan. Talk to your local branch about how they decide on who can get a loan, on the size of the loan and on the length of time allowed for paying it back.

Warning:

If you are considering getting a loan, don't be tempted to go to a loan shark, no matter how desperate you feel your money situation is. Loan sharks will make you pay back far more for the loan than a bank would and can be very threatening if you fail to make a payment. If you need help because you are worried about money, there are legitimate organisations such as MABS (see below) that can help you sort out your money worries.

29

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards let you buy something now and pay for it later. You get a bill every month, which you must pay by a certain date. If you don't pay on time, you will be charged a very high rate of interest, which keeps being added on to what you owe each time you miss a payment. So, with credit cards, it is all too easy to find yourself in a lot of unnecessary debt.



SO, BE VERY CAREFUL!

PREPAY CREDIT CARDS

These are cards that work exactly like credit cards in shops and online, except for one important difference — you have to put money on the card before you can spend it. It's a good alternative to a credit card, especially if you do a lot of shopping on the internet (where you can often get great bargains!). They usually charge you for the card, and a certain amount each time you

Money Matters

'top up' the card. However, these charges are often less than a credit card interest rate. There are a few different providers of these cards in Ireland, some of which are listed below:

O2 Money Card	www.o2online.ie
Money Bookers PrePay Card	g.moneybookers.ie
RubyCard	www.rubycard.ie

OVERDRAFTS

An overdraft is a loan you arrange through your bank. It allows you to spend more money than you have in your current account up to an agreed limit, known as the 'overdraft limit'. The amount you owe on your overdraft goes up or down depending on how much you spend and put into your current account. Your bank usually sets an agreed time limit, so that you have to pay your overdraft back by a set date. Overdrafts often have additional charges attached so make sure you ask your bank what they charge.

Remember: borrowing money is like signing a contract, and there can be serious consequences if you fail to pay it back in the time agreed. It's your responsibility to make sure you repay the loan on time. But if you do run into problems, there are people who can help. Some of these are detailed below.

GET SUPPORT

Sometimes we lose track of what we are spending and end up with not enough to pay for everything we need. It can be tough budgeting, especially if you don't have a lot of money coming in. But there are people who can help you, whether you're stuck for some cash for food until payday, or if you are in serious debt. The important thing to remember is that the sooner you know you're in trouble and do something about it, the easier it will be to get it sorted. Listed below are some very good organisations that can help you if you have money problems.

MABS (MONEY ADVICE AND BUDGETING SERVICE)

Can help you to manage your money and make sure you always have enough for essentials such as rent, food and other bills. MABS have offices all over the country. See their website for details: www.mabs.ie **Helpline: (1890) 283438**

ST VINCENT DE PAUL

The Society of St Vincent de Paul can help you out with lots of necessities that you might not be able to pay for. They can also offer advice and a friendly ear. There are local offices all over the country, so to find yours check www.svp.ie

31

FINANCIAL ENTITLEMENTS

On top of benefits such as the Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit (see the 'Employment' section for more details), if you are struggling to make ends meet on welfare payments, there are some extra ones that you may be entitled to. The best thing to do is talk to your aftercare worker or your social worker, or call in to your local social welfare office and ask someone about these other payments. Below are some that you may not be aware of.



THE SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE ALLOWANCE (SWA) SCHEME

Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people who do not have enough money to pay for everything they need. You should apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance to the Department of Social Protection’s representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) at your local health centre as soon as the need arises. To receive these extra payments you will have to be ‘means tested’. A ‘means test’ is a way for the Department of Social Protection to work out what money you have and whether or not you qualify for any extra payments.

Learn more by logging on to www.welfare.ie

Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance
Rent Supplement
Mortgage Interest Supplement
Exceptional Needs Payments
Urgent Needs Payments
Dietary Supplement
Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance
School Meals Programme
Humanitarian Assistance Scheme

THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1. What is a budget?

2. Why is a budget so important to have?

3. What is needed to open a bank account?

4. Who are MABS?

5 It is a great time to go shopping if you are hungry.

True

☐

False

☐

6 Price checking between stores is a good way to save money.

True

☐

False

☐

7 Don't freeze your leftover food, as it will go bad.

True

☐

False

☐

8 Sales are the worst time to go shopping.

True

☐

False

☐

9 Cheap food is always the best.

True

☐

False

☐

10 What is means testing?

11 Where is your local community welfare office?

Money Matters

Other Notes



MY RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

**“The State guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate the personal rights of the citizen.
(The Irish Constitution)”**



My Rights & Responsibilities

MY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

37

As a human being, you have rights. That means there are basic things that you and everyone in society is entitled to have, such as the right to an education and the right to vote. These rights are written into national and international laws, as well as documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. In Ireland, most of our rights come from our Constitution. Changes to our Constitution can only be made by a referendum and you have the right to vote in any such referendum.

It is important to remember that rights go hand-in-hand with responsibilities. Once you turn 18 years of age, you have a lot more rights such as voting but you also have more responsibilities. For example, you have a responsibility to obey all the laws of the land and to respect other people's rights.

YOUR ENTITLEMENT TO AFTERCARE

As a young person leaving care and moving to independent living, you have an entitlement to an aftercare programme to support you before, during and after you move. What is included in the programme will be based on the Aftercare Plan you will agree with your carers, social worker and aftercare worker. You may need very little support or you may need quite a lot. Either way, it is important

My Rights and Responsibilities

you talk about this as soon as possible before you turn 18. In fact, you should talk to your social worker about aftercare when you are 16 so you'll have plenty of time to plan for your future. For more information, see the 'Moving Forward' section of this guide.

For a great resource on your rights in Irish law, check out www.citizensinformation.ie

Since Ireland is a part of the European Union, you also have rights that are enshrined in EU Law. For a discussion of these rights and how they relate to younger people, have a look at www.europa.eu/youth

38

This section talks about rights in general, but other sections of the guide talk about specific rights, such as rights around employment, parenting and safety. Make sure to read those sections about rights too.

YOUR RIGHT TO HAVE YOUR SAY — VOTING



If you are over 18 years of age you have the right to vote. But to vote you must register. To get on the register you will have to visit your local county council or go to www.checktheregister.ie/ Voting registration forms are available from your local post office, library, Garda station and local county council offices. You can also download the

forms at the above web address. Being registered to vote means you can take part in deciding on who is elected to government at local, national and European level. The more young people who get out and vote, the more political parties will have to pay attention to issues that affect young people. But if you don't vote you won't have a say in how your country is run. If you would like to get more involved in politics, all the main political parties in Ireland have youth wings, where young people can get involved with issues that are important to them.

My Rights and Responsibilities

Political Party	Party Website	Youth Organisation
Fine Gael	www.finegael.com	Young Fine Gael: www.yfg.ie/
Labour	www.labour.ie	Labour Youth: www.labour.ie
Fianna Fáil	www.fiannafail.ie	Ógra Fianna Fáil: www.ogra.ie
Sinn Féin	www.sinnfein.ie	Ógra Sinn Féin: ograshinnfein.blogspot.com
Socialist Party	www.socialistparty.net	Social Party Youth: www.socialistparty.net

39

YOUR RIGHT TO ACCESS YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Records have been securely kept about your time in care. You have a right to have these files kept securely, and the minimum amount of people as possible should have access to them (such as your aftercare worker or social worker). Under the **Freedom of Information**

Act (1997) you have a right to read your care file or sections of it if you wish to. You can also look at medical files, education files or anything else about you that people have made notes or files on. You can speak to your social worker to set up a meeting to view your care files. Remember that you may find some of the information distressing. Your social worker or a friend can sit with you and help you go through the information and answer any questions you might have.



OTHER RIGHTS

In different areas of your life, you have different rights. For example, you have a right to look for employment — but you do not have a right to a job. However, if you do have a job, you have the right to be treated well by your employer, and to things such as a minimum wage and decent working conditions (see the ‘Employment’ section for more on employment rights). Likewise, you have the right to start a family, and women have the right to maternity care when they are pregnant. But if you do not treat your family well, your right to see your family/children may be taken away by the courts. If you have children, you have a responsibility to look after them, to make sure they are safe, well cared for and as happy as they can be.

40

PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS

DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY

A person is said to be discriminated against if he/she is treated less favourably than someone else because of their race, religion, disability, age, family status, gender, sexual orientation, being a member of the Traveller Community or marital status. By law we are protected against discrimination in the workplace, shops and businesses, and in gaining access to education and accommodation.

For more information contact The Equality Authority on (1890) 245545 or @ www.equality.ie



SEEKING LEGAL ADVICE/AID

LEGAL ADVICE

If you think your rights are not being upheld or that you are being discriminated against you may want to get some legal advice to see what you can do about it. The best person to talk to is a solicitor. A solicitor will know all about the law and can tell you if you are being treated fairly or not, and if not, what you can do about it. The solicitor can write letters on your behalf and act for you in negotiations (talks) with other persons.

If you wish to seek legal advice contact your local law centre. Details of the local law centres are available at www.legallaidboard.ie or you can call (1890) 615200.

FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centre) provides a free legal advice service throughout Ireland. These centres are open in the evening and the service is provided by volunteer lawyers or advisors.

Phone: (01) 874 5690 Website: www.flac.ie

The screenshot shows the FLAC website with a green header. The main content area features a large article titled "More thought needed for access to justice in legal services reform" with a sub-headline "Government proposals to change how legal services are delivered in Ireland do not prioritise access to the legal system and thus will not improve the situation for many people, says FLAC. We believe that the Legal Services Regulation Bill is unlikely to increase access to legal services for non-commercial bodies, as it does not reduce legal costs and does not tackle hugely problematic issues like the overloaded courts and the underfunded civil legal aid system." Below this is a section for "Submission on the Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011" with a cover image. To the right, there are sections for "Facts" (FLAC runs specialised advice clinics for Irish speaking and deaf clients), "Latest News" (listing briefings on the Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011, a code of conduct, and transgender rights), and "Current Campaigns" (listing 21st century law needed, 21st century law, and consumer credit). On the right sidebar, there is a search bar, a "pila" logo (public interest law alliance), a "Need Legal Help?" section with a telephone icon, and a "Find your nearest Legal Advice Centre" section with a map of Ireland.

LEGAL AID

If you are living on a small income there is a scheme that can help you pay for legal services. This can mean that the services of solicitors and, if needed, barristers are cheaply available to you. The service covers anything from being represented in court to having a solicitor's letter written for you.

The Legal Aid Board provides legal advice and legal aid to people whose disposable income is less than a certain amount (you can find out more details by speaking to someone in the Legal Aid Board — contact details below).

All young people under 18 years of age are entitled to free legal aid.

Young people aged over 18 years of age are also entitled to free legal aid if their disposable income is below a certain amount per year. Their parents' or guardians' income is NOT taken into account.

In order to qualify for legal aid and/or legal advice, you must pass both a means test and a merit test.

Means Test — You will have to take a means test on both your income (salary, wages, any benefits) and the things you own, i.e. cars, houses, bank savings, investments and so on.

The means test will decide whether you can afford your own legal costs. Depending on your finances you will either get free legal aid and/or advice, or will pay a certain amount yourself.

Merit Test — This is an initial test to ensure that your case is a legitimate one and that a 'reasonable person' would take the case and would be advised to take the case.

Contact the Legal Aid Board for more information.
Visit www.legalaidboard.ie or call (1890) 615200.

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IF STOPPED BY THE GARDAÍ

The Gardaí can ask you to stop at any time. The following are some tips if this ever happens to you:

Stay calm and be polite — don't panic or lose your temper.

Remember: the Garda is only doing his job.

- Ask why you've been stopped and if they want to search you ask them why.
- Ask to see their identification — it is your legal right to know the name of the Garda, just in case you need to follow up on anything later.
- Ask if you are being arrested — you can be arrested if it is thought that you have committed an offence. You must be told why you are being arrested.

43

If you are not being arrested:

If you go voluntarily to a Garda station to assist the Gardaí with their enquiries and are questioned, you are free to leave the station at any time unless you are being arrested. You cannot be arrested for the purpose of gathering evidence or 'helping the Gardaí with their enquiries'

If you are being arrested:

Except for giving your name and address (and remember: don't lie about either of these, as it will be easily checked at the station) you're not obliged to say anything when arrested, except in some cases such as offences against the state or offences under the road traffic acts. Do not resist arrest as doing this will add to the list of reasons for arrest.

My Rights and Responsibilities

IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

- You have the right to let someone know you have been arrested.
- If you are not sure of your rights or think you might be in serious trouble ask for legal advice as soon as you can.
- You can contact the Garda Ombudsman if you're unhappy with the way you've been treated.

For information check out

Irish Council for Civil Liberties www.iccl.ie and click on the "Know Your Rights" tab. The Garda Ombudsman deals with complaints made by members of the public concerning the actions and behaviours of members of the Garda Síochána. LoCall: (1890) 600800 Email: info@gsoc.ie www.gardaombudsman.ie

44



Resources:

Citizens Information

This service provides great information on everything from public services to entitlements for citizens in Ireland.

Website: www.citizensinformation.ie Telephone: (01) 605 9000

SpunOut

The website www.spunout.ie has great information about the rights of young people in Ireland and lots of interesting discussion topics that may answer some more of your questions and concerns in more detail.

THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



How can you register to vote?

Where can you gain more information on voting and political parties?

What are the important things to remember if stopped by the Gardaí?

45

What are the important things to remember if searched by the Gardaí?

My Rights and Responsibilities



How can you make a complaint if you are not happy about how you were treated by the Gardaí?

If you wish to access personal information where do you go (phone, website, e-mail)?

Phone:

Website:

E-mail:

If you are suffering discrimination who can you contact (phone, website)?

Phone:

Website:

Where can you get legal advice?

What is legal aid?

If over eighteen why would you be entitled to free legal aid?

| MY NEW HOME

“

**Be grateful for the home you have,
knowing that at this moment,
all you have is all you need.**

(Breathnach, Sarah Ban)

”



My New Home

So you're getting ready to leave care and preparing for independence and being out on your own. Maybe you're thinking about getting your own place. Maybe it all seems a bit much. Wherever you think you might like to live, your social worker, aftercare worker or carers can talk to you about the options open to you.

49

Whatever you decide, you're going to need to buy lots of new things to set up home properly. Below you will find a useful checklist for all the things you'll need. You should also have a look in the 'Money Matters' section of this guide for tips on budgeting, because you need to start thinking about managing your money from day one.

WHERE WILL I LIVE?

Here are Some Possibilities:

Staying on with Carers/Return to Family

If this is something that interests you, you should discuss this with your social worker.

It may be possible to stay on in your current placement for a short period of time, although remember: this cannot be guaranteed. Staying on a little longer may give you time to decide what you want to do next. Some young people decide that they want to go back and live with their parents or other family members for a while if this option is available to them. It's best to first get some advice from your social worker.

SEMI-INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION

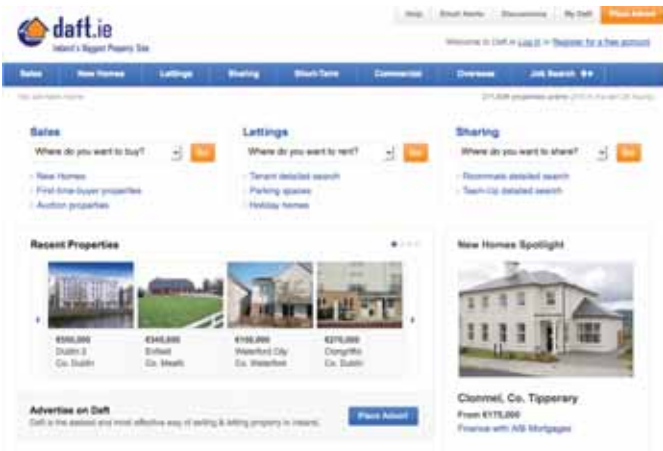
Some young people choose to live in semi-independent accommodation and have a keyworker and staff on call. This can be a flat belonging to a service that is responsible for providing aftercare accommodation.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Transitional housing is for people who need time and assistance to prepare for independent living. It provides medium-term accommodation and a support programme that helps residents develop the skills to live independently and address any issues that might be a problem when they are living by themselves. Some young people choose to live in transitional/semi-independent accommodation in order to get the help they need to prepare for independent living.

SUPPORTED LODGINGS

Some young people choose to live in a family setting. Supported lodgings are best suited to young people aged 15 years and over who need some support and advice along the way. In some HSE areas supported lodgings are an alternative option for young people in aftercare. It allows young people to live in a family setting where they can get support and advice.



PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

If you decide to rent a place of your own, you may be entitled to Rent Supplement. To apply for Rent Supplement you should contact the Department of Social Protection's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) at your local health centre. To help you find rented accommodation you can look online at www.daft.ie and www.myhome.ie



51

FLAT/HOUSE-SHARING

Renting accommodation with another person or a group of people usually ends up being cheaper. Rent, bills and other costs are shared among all residents. Living with people has other advantages. You are less likely to feel lonely and can make good friends.

MOVING IN

You should talk to your aftercare worker about a 'settling in' grant, which you might be entitled to. This can really help with the costs at the start of living in a new place.



Your lease is extremely important. It is your proof that you have entered into an agreement with your landlord. Make sure you read your lease/tenancy agreement carefully before you sign. Consider exactly what you are being asked to sign and make sure it's right for you. Lease agreements are usually for fixed periods (such as 6 or 12 months). Coming up to the time when your lease expires you can speak to your landlord about extending it. If you are not certain about your lease talk to someone who may already have a lease or visit www.threshold.ie

DON'T FORGET

Landlords insist you give a deposit before you move in. This is usually a month's rent in advance on top of the first month's rent. You will need to keep this money set aside and take this into account when making your budget and deciding what you can afford. This money is used by the landlord to cover any costs incurred as a result of damage to the residence during your stay, above normal wear and tear.

Your landlord must return promptly any deposit paid by you, the tenant, when you are moving out. The deposit may not be returned or deductions may be made by the landlord where :

There is back rent outstanding (not paid).

There are costs incurred to repair damage above normal wear and tear.

My New Home

When you move in you are entitled by law to get a rent book, a written letting agreement, tenancy agreement or signed lease from your landlord. Whichever it is, it must contain the following information:

- All payments made to your landlord.
- Name and address of the tenant.
- Name and address of the landlord.
- Term of the tenancy (e.g. 6 months).
- Amount of rent, when and how it is to be paid (e.g. cash, standing order).
- Details of other payments (e.g. phone, TV).
- Amount and purpose of any deposit paid and the conditions under which it will be returned.
- Information on basic rights and duties of both the landlord and the tenant.

53

Your landlord must also provide you with an inventory (list) of all the contents of the house/flat when you move in and must go through it with you to check you have everything it says you should. Don't forget to inquire about bin collections and other bills.

BILLS BILLS BILLS

Connection charges:

You may be asked to pay a connection charge for electricity, gas or the telephone when you move in. You will need to contact the gas, electricity, telephone and internet providers to get all the household bills transferred into your name.



Security deposits:

New customers may have to pay a security deposit to get connected to some of the utilities. For example, all new customers of the ESB or those who have not held an account within the past two years must either:

Sign up for direct debit (so your bill will be paid directly from your bank account)

Or pay a security deposit of €300

Electricity bills: These are issued every two months and are based on meter readings or estimations of electricity used. You must pay your electricity bill within 14 days of receiving your bill to ensure that your supply stays constant. There are several ways to pay, including at your local post office, online and by phone. There are three companies that provide electricity: Electric Ireland (used to be ESB), Airtricity and Bord Gáis. All three companies have other options for making payments, including the following:

ESB Electric Ireland: Pay your bill and buy token meter cards at shops displaying the PayPoint logo. You will need your Easypay card or a copy of your bill to make payments or your Powerpay card to buy token meter cards.

You can also pay your bill at shops displaying the Payzone logo. You will need your Easypay card or a copy of your bill when making payments. And you can get big discounts on your bill by paying by direct debit. Go to www.esb.ie for more information.

Airtricity: To spread the cost of your Airtricity bills, you can make smaller top-up payments. Use your SmarterEnergy card to make top-up payments in any An Post or selected PostPoint outlets whenever you want. Go to www.airtricity.com for more information.

Bord Gáis: You can get discounts if you pay by direct debit from your bank account, depending on the company that supplies you with your power.

My New Home

Gas bills are issued every two months and are based on meter readings or estimations of gas used. You must pay your gas bill within 14 days of receiving it to make sure that your supply stays on.

Rubbish is collected once a week or once a fortnight either by the county council or by a private collector. In some areas you pay for a tag that you put on your bin when you place it outside. Many places now have some kind of recycling bins, which are usually free, and using them is a good way to lower your refuse collection bills. Ask your landlord for details.

Note: If you have a television you need a **TV licence**.

It is required by law and you face a fine if caught without one and could be prosecuted. TV licences are issued for one year. You can pay at any post office. You can also pay in installments by purchasing TV licence stamps at your local post office.

Get more information at www.anpost.ie

55

If you need help with your bills, MABS (the Money Advice and Budgeting Service) will be able to help you to sort out your money and your bills. You can call them at (1890) 283438 or visit their website www.mabs.ie See '**Money Matters**' for advice about managing your money.



SETTLING IN COSTS — TIME TO SHOP

When you first move into your own place, there are lots of things you need to buy. Some of these things might come with your lease, but you need to be prepared to budget for these items. Some of them you won't even think of until you're actually living in the new place!

First of all you need to decide what are essentials (i.e. you won't be able to spend your first night in a house without them). A duvet, pillows, towels, things to use for cooking food — these are essentials. It's hard to be comfortable without them. Things such as TVs and DVD players might seem essential, but if you can't afford them right at the start, you can do without them for a while.

Some Things You Might Need to Get:

Bedroom	Bathroom	Kitchen	Other
Sheets & duvet cover	Towels	Cutlery	Torch
Duvet/pillows	Toilet paper	Plates/bowls	Matches
Clothes hangers	Bath mat	Pots & pans	Washing powder
	Hand soap	Glasses & cups	
		Tea towels	
		Bin bags	
		Cleaning equipment	



TENANTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a tenant, you have certain rights and responsibilities. These include paying your rent, keeping the place in good order, avoiding causing damage or nuisance and complying with any special terms set down in your lease. If you break the terms of your lease by not doing one of these things, it will be more difficult for you to assert your rights. If you don't pay rent when it's due, cause unreasonable damage to the property, make a nuisance of yourself with neighbours by, for example, having loud parties late at night, you can and probably will lose your home.

Maintenance

If you are in any kind of rented accommodation, the landlord is responsible for all maintenance. If something breaks, you should call your landlord immediately.

Don't try and fix something yourself unless you are confident you can do it right, and you have the proper tools.

Of course, there are some things that you can fix yourself once you know how. There are lots of places you can go to in order to find out how to do these basic tasks.



www.doityourself.com



www.ehow.com

REPAIRS

The landlord has to carry out repairs, except where damage beyond normal wear and tear has been caused by you, the tenant. It is your responsibility to ensure that no damage is caused to your accommodation either by yourself or by friends you have over.



www.videojug.com

STANDARDS

Your landlord must, by law, make sure that your home complies with certain minimum standards (e.g. free from damp, in good structural repair, hot and cold water, adequate means of heating and ventilation, appliances in good working order, electrical wiring, gas, pipes in good repair). If your home does not comply with these



www.ehow.com



www.youtube.com

My New Home

standards, you can report it to your local authority or **the Private Residential Tenancies Board**. An inspection will be carried out and the landlord ordered to do any necessary repairs.

Contact **Threshold, the Private Residential Tenancies Board** or your local authority for further advice.



59

www.en.wikipedia.org

RENT INCREASES

Landlords can only raise the rent to the 'open market rate'. That means your landlord can't raise the rent so high that it would be unreasonable for you to keep paying rent there, or above what you would expect to pay if you were a new tenant. The landlord may also only raise the rent once in a 12-month period unless there has been a substantial change in the nature of the accommodation.

MOVING OUT

Termination of Lease The landlord can terminate your lease without reason during the first 6 months, but after this the landlord will only be able to end it on specific grounds. Acceptable grounds include the tenant not complying with their responsibilities (e.g. not paying their rent), the landlord intending to sell the place or the landlord requiring the place for his own occupation or for a family member. The landlord must also give you, the tenant, written notice of termination. The period of notice will depend on the duration of the tenancy.

Giving Notice

If you, the tenant, want to terminate a tenancy and move out of a property, you must give the landlord notice in writing. A phone call, text message or even an email will not do. Even if the landlord is agreeable to a tenant's oral notice to leave, Threshold recommends that you follow up with formal written notice, that is, a short letter to the landlord, or risk not getting your deposit back.

Getting Your Deposit Back

Only hand over money when you're happy with the accommodation.

Get a receipt.

Make sure it is recorded in your rent book or by receipt if you have a lease.

Go through your inventory with your landlord before moving in. Make sure everything that's on it is in the house/flat and check that it's all in good condition. Point out anything you think is not up to standard (like a dent in a wall, any damaged items, etc.) and make sure both you and the landlord make a note of it. Take photos of every room. Ask your landlord to sign and date them. This ensures that at a later date your landlord cannot blame you for damage caused before you moved in.

Look after your accommodation and let your landlord know immediately if any repairs are needed. Allow your landlord access to make repairs.

Give appropriate notice in writing when you are leaving.

Make sure all rent and bills are paid.

Check the inventory to make sure everything is still in good order.

WARNING: If you are considering moving out anyway it may seem tempting to simply skip paying your bills, especially if you are confident you won't get your deposit back. But remember: Landlords ask for references from previous landlords before agreeing to rent out accommodation.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Getting Help with Rent and Deposit If you claim social welfare, are on a FÁS scheme or work part-time, you may qualify for help towards your rent from the **Department of Social Protection** speak to a rep at your local health centre. In some exceptional circumstances, you may also get help with a deposit. Also, all tenants are entitled to claim tax relief on rent. So contact your local tax office www.revenue.ie

61

If you have received a loan of your lease deposit from your local authority, you need to make sure you get it back at the end of your lease agreement, otherwise you will be refused another deposit for a rental.

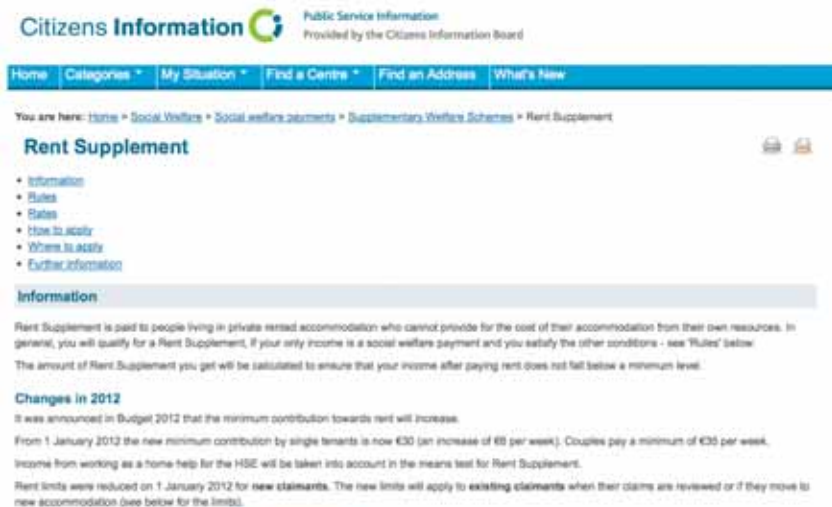
If you are in full-time education your deposit and rental costs will be addressed in your aftercare plan.

There are changes happening all the time with regards to the different entitlements. The best thing to do is check with the Department of Social Protection's Representative (formerly known as CWO) in your area, and they can help you.

RENT SUPPLEMENT

Rent Supplement is paid to people living in private rented accommodation who cannot provide for the cost of their accommodation from their own resources. In general, you will qualify for a rent supplement if your only income is social welfare. You will not qualify for rent supplement if you are in full-time employment or attending full-time education. However, if you are getting a Back to Education Allowance you may be entitled to the supplement.

Check out the official guide on the web at:
www.citizensinformation.ie



62

LIVING ALLOWANCE

Some young people who leave care will receive social welfare payments to live on while attending some courses, while other young people who are in full-time education will be in receipt of a living allowance that they'll get from the HSE. Ask your social worker or aftercare worker about this.

FUEL ALLOWANCE

Fuel Allowance is a payment under the National Fuel Scheme to help with the cost of heating your home. It is paid to people who are on long-term social welfare benefits or getting HSE payments and need support to provide for their heating needs.

Go to www.welfare.ie for more information

HOUSEHOLD BUDGET SCHEME

This is a scheme operated by An Post that helps those getting certain social welfare payments in Ireland to spread the cost of some household bills over the year. Under this scheme, a fixed amount is deducted from your social welfare payment each week. In order to qualify, you must be getting certain types of social welfare payments, such as the Jobseeker's Allowance or the One Parent Family payment, and your payment **must** be paid through your local post office. The Household Budget Scheme is free of charge.

Local authority rent or mortgage.
Electricity — ESB
Gas Bord Gáis
Eircom

63

Here are the bills you can pay using the Household Budget Scheme. Only the **service providers listed below** are part of the scheme.

For more information on this scheme go to www.anpost.ie



Always make sure you keep written records of everything to do with your home: this includes receipts for things bought for the house, copies of bills and rental agreements, everything. You never know when you will need them to back something up.

ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

Threshold

Threshold is a national housing charity which advises people about their housing rights. Their website provides lots of general information regarding the rights of tenants and landlords. For more personalised assistance contact your nearest Threshold advice centre. Website: www.threshold.ie



64

Dublin Advice Centre	Tel: (01) 678 6096
Galway Advice Centre	Tel: (091) 563080
Cork Advice Centre	Tel: (021) 427 8848
Waterford Area	LoCall: (1890) 434445

PRTB (PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD)

The **PRTB** resolves disputes between landlords and tenants, operates a national tenancy registration system and provides information and policy advice on the private rented sector. The PRTB's dispute-resolution service replaces the courts in relation to the majority of landlord and tenant disputes. To refer a dispute to the PRTB you should contact them directly to discuss the matter. Go to www.prtb.ie or Tel: (01) 6350 600 for more information

HOMELESSNESS

Being homeless is about more than not having a roof over your head. It's about a lack of security, lack of privacy and lack of safety. If you do lose your home, or are at risk of losing your home,

My New Home

for whatever reason, there are organisations that can help you find a new home as quickly as possible and support you through this very difficult time in your life. The important thing to remember is not to panic and to seek support and advice as soon as possible.

IN IRELAND YOU ARE CONSIDERED HOMELESS IF:

You are sleeping rough or in a squat (unoccupied building). **OR**

You are staying in an emergency hostel, refuge or other type of temporary accommodation, such as a B&B, that has been provided by the HSE or local authority. **OR** You are staying somewhere, but are at risk of harm if you remain there.



Squat (unoccupied building)

65

IN DUBLIN

If you are homeless, sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness because where you are staying is placing you at risk of harm, call into:

**Local Authority Assessment and Placement Service,
160 Capel Street, Dublin 1**

Or, you can telephone the **24-Hour Homeless Helpline on
(1800) 707707.**

Both services will organise temporary accommodation for you if you have nowhere else to stay and will assign you a housing officer who will work with you to put in place more long-term accommodation options.

OUTSIDE OF DUBLIN

Contact your **local authority (City Council or County Council)** to register as homeless and get information about services in your area.

If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness and aged under 18 years:

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility to respond to your needs, and a social worker from the HSE will help you. For this to happen, you need to go to your Local Area Health Office or HSE Health Centre. However, if it is after 5pm, you must go to the nearest Garda station instead and the Gardaí will contact a HSE social worker, who will collect you from the Garda station and arrange emergency accommodation for you.

Other organisations that can help you:

Focus Ireland, the Simon Community, St Vincent de Paul, as well as many other organisations nationwide, run excellent local services providing information, accommodation and support.

FOCUS IRELAND

Provides information, advice and accommodation services all over Ireland to people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Call the numbers below for advice and information in your area.

Dublin	(01) 671 2555
Limerick	(051) 879807
Cork	(021) 4552498
Sligo	(071) 9149974

DUBLIN SIMON

Provides information, advice and accommodation services all over Ireland. Call the number below to be directed to the services you need in your locality.

Tel: (01) 671 5551

ST VINCENT DE PAUL

Provides a range of practical supports to people in need, including financial assistance.

Tel: (01) 838 6990.

Give your details and you will be directed to an office near you.

67

The screenshot displays the Focus Ireland website. At the top, the logo 'Focus Ireland' is accompanied by the tagline 'Creating homes together'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: 'How Can We Help You?', 'Who We Are', 'Our Services', 'Research Policy & Education', 'Work With Us', 'Get Involved', and 'Our Work in The Media'. A search bar is located on the left. The main content area features a large banner asking 'Are you currently homeless or at risk of losing your home? Focus Ireland can help.' with a 'Search for location' button. To the right of the banner is a photo of a young girl. Below the banner, there are sections for 'Our Services' (listing Homelessness Support, Housing Support, and a 'View Selected Content' button), 'Are You Homeless?' (with a 'Take Action' button), and 'Latest News & Events' (listing various events and reports). On the right side, there is a sidebar with a 'Donate Now' button and a section for 'Society of St. Vincent de Paul' featuring a 'Displacement' article. At the bottom, there is a 'Donate Now' button and a section for 'The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul exists to fight poverty'.

THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1. What are the types of housing available after you leave care?

Type of Housing	What it's like

68

2. Why is your lease such an important document?

3. What types of bills might you have to pay?

4. How much does a television licence cost, and where can you buy one?

5. What can stop you from getting your rental deposit back?



6. What types of financial aid might be available to you?

7. Who are the PRTB?

8. What does being homeless mean?

9. If you are homeless where can you get help?

My New Home

Other Notes



EDUCATION & TRAINING

“

**The beautiful thing about learning
is that no one can take it away
from you. (B.B. King)**

”



EDUCATION & TRAINING

A good education is the best investment you can make in yourself. It opens doors and gives you more choices in life to find out what you want to do. There is an old saying, *'Education is the one thing you can give yourself that no one can take away'*, and it's true.

73

Education provides greater opportunities to get a job with better pay and chances for promotion. You owe it to yourself to get the best out of your education and give yourself those chances. Professional qualifications allow you take control about where you want to work and the type of work you want to do. It is important to set goals for your life to help you realise your own potential and gain a sense of achievement

For one reason or another you may have left school early without a minimum of 5 passes in the Leaving Certificate or an equivalent qualification. Leaving school early does not have to mean the end of your education.

If, at the point of leaving care, you are still engaged in education and training you are entitled to continue to receive aftercare support, usually until the end of your course and that might mean that the HSE will pay your course fees.

In this section we look at different ways to continue your education and get useful qualifications.



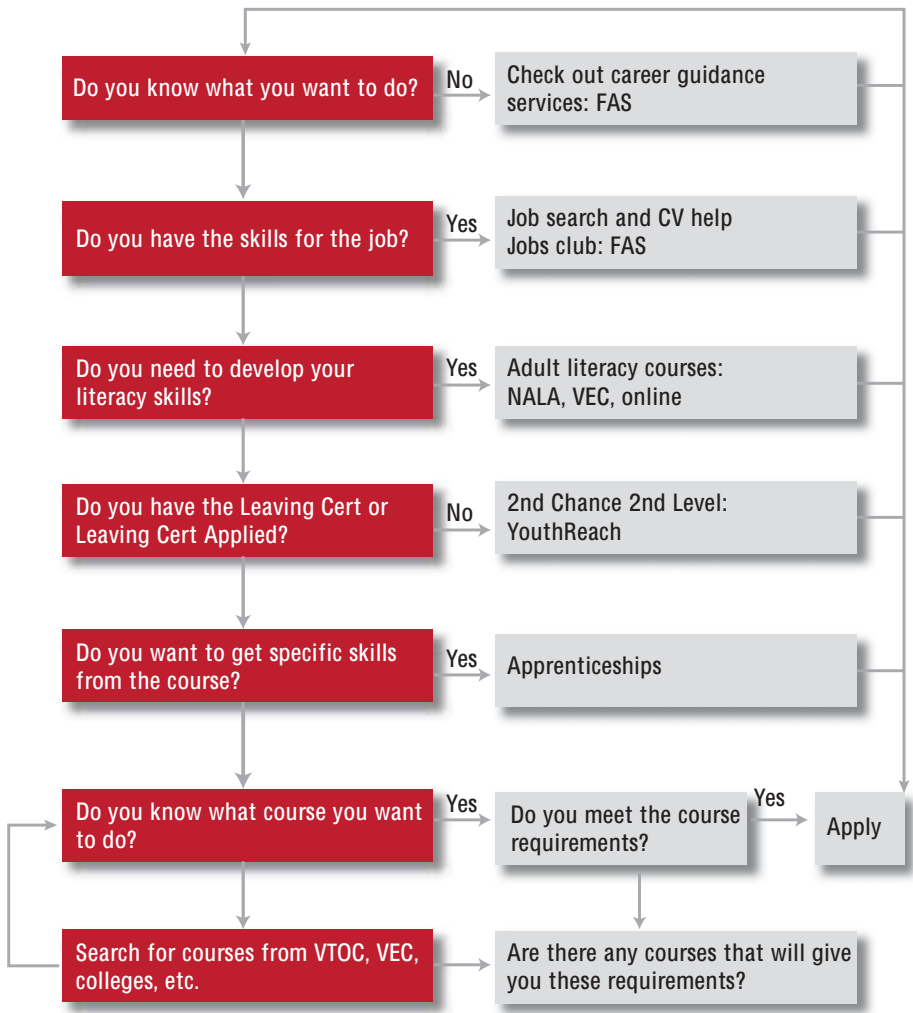
74

PATHWAYS BACK INTO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There's more than one way to become qualified in whatever it is you want to do. There's also more than one way to find a job or course you want to do, and more than one career choice for you, if you want. The hard part can often be finding out what it is that you'd like to study or work in. Sometimes the number of choices can be overwhelming. There is another section in this guide on employment and what getting a job means. This section is focused on the different types of education you can get, whether it's going to university, training as part of an apprenticeship or doing courses to improve your chances of getting a job.

This chart might be able to help you figure out what kind of education would be good for you. Start at the top and answer the questions, and follow the arrows until you have the information you need.

Education and Training



Now that you have an idea of what it is you'd like to do, have a look at the following sections and at the 'Contacts' section at the back of this guide to get more information on the different options.



EDUCATION OPTIONS

PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) Courses

VECs throughout Ireland provide PLC courses in a wide range of disciplines and subjects. The courses are designed to prepare students for work by giving them specific skills and training, and also act as a stepping stone to other third-level qualifications at ITs, universities or other colleges.

Get more information at www.qualifax.ie

Vocational Education Committees (VECs)

VECs provide a wide range of education, training and support services within local communities. These education and training programmes include second-level, adult, community and second-chance education, PLC programmes and a variety of training programmes and other activities.

Go to www.vec.ie for more information about VECs in your area.

ADULT LITERACY COURSES

VEC Adult Literacy Courses are open to all adults who want help with reading and writing. It's free to join a VEC Adult Literacy Scheme and you can join any time during the year. Contact the 'Adult Literacy Organiser' or the 'Adult Education Organiser' in your local VEC.

NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency)

NALA helps people to improve their literacy using tutors and distance-learning services. Freephone: (1800) 202065
Website: www.nala.ie

**Learn online for free by logging on to
www.literacytools.ie or www.writeon.ie**

Youthreach

Youthreach is a second chance at education for 15–20-year olds. Students have the opportunity to gain qualifications and experiences in new areas and activities. The Youthreach Programme gives students a better chance at finding a career and getting the most out of life. The Youthreach Programme is run by VECs in Youthreach Centres nationwide.
Go to www.youthreach.ie to find your nearest centre.



COMMUNITY TRAINING CENTRES

Community Training Centres are community-based organisations funded by SOLAS/FÁS. If you are between the ages of 16 and 21 years and have left school early without any formal qualifications, these centres offer you the opportunity to improve your skills and take part in vocational training.

Go to www.fas.ie for more information.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME (VTOS)

VTOS enables unemployed people aged 21 years and over who have been receiving social welfare payments (Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit, One Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance, Disability Benefit) for at least 6 months the opportunity to return to full-time education and training free of charge and without affecting their payments. You can study for your Junior and Leaving Cert, take PLC courses and get your ECDL (European computer driving licence), as well as much more.

Tel: (01) 402 0427. Website: www.vtos.ie



APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship is an excellent opportunity to learn skills and gain experience and qualifications. Apprentices are paid as they progress through their apprenticeships. Once you've completed an apprenticeship, you will become a craftsperson in the chosen occupation and hold a nationally and internationally recognised qualification.

Contact your local SOLAS/FÁS office for more information regarding registration and check out www.fas.ie



79

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES/JOB CLUBS

Job clubs provide training to assist people who are ready for work to develop skills they can use to find a job. Social welfare payments are not affected. Anyone who is ready to work and aged between 16 and 64 years of age can join, and will have access to facilities such as phones, computers, email and newspapers.

For further information contact your local SOLAS/FÁS Office and see www.fas.ie

THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION

Third-level education means going to college/university and studying for a diploma or degree. You can go full-time, or work and study part-time. There are a wide range of colleges and courses all over Ireland so do some research and find something that interests you and that you think you could do well at.

You will need a Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification to enter third-level education. Different requirements maybe applicable to mature students over 23. The most common route to starting a course is by filling in a CAO application. Check out www.cao.ie for all the information you'll need to complete the process.

All universities and colleges have admissions staff that can help you with any questions you may have.

The **Higher Education Access Route** is a programme set up to help students from underrepresented groups to access third-level education at reduced points levels for courses and with financial support. Log on to www.accesscollege.ie for more information. You need to be aged under 23 years of age in the January of the year of application, and you also need to meet some financial criteria to apply for a place.

Check out www.colleges.ie for information about different types of colleges in different areas all over Ireland. It's a good learning tool to help you get a feel for all of the possibilities that are out there.

A really useful website when researching options in education is www.qualifax.ie

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

There are lots of financial schemes available providing help for people deciding to continue their education. The majority of these schemes are means tested and priority is given to students most in need of financial support

STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

The Student Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for full-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties while attending college. All colleges have staff that can help and guide you.

Get more information at www.studentfinance.ie

BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE (BTEA)

The BTEA scheme is aimed at helping people who are unemployed, who receive a One-Parent Family Payment or who have a disability to take second- or third-level education courses. The payment is not means tested but the rate you get depends on how much you are getting in other benefits. You will get the allowance for the months of the year that you are doing the course. If you are on work placement or work experience that is an essential part of your course, you may continue getting BTEA.

81

Cost of Education Allowance: In addition to your weekly BTEA payment, you will also be entitled to an annual Cost of Education Allowance, which is paid at the start of each academic year (September/October).

HOW TO APPLY FOR BTEA

You can get lots of information by checking out www.studentfinance.ie You will need to fill out a form (BTE1), which you can get a copy of from your local social welfare office or by logging on to www.welfare.ie Contact your local social welfare office for more information about where to send your application.

MAINTENANCE GRANT

The maintenance grant is the main source of financial help available for students in full-time PLC courses and full-time higher education courses.

Family and/or personal income will be assessed when you apply for a maintenance grant but there are also some other conditions. Contact your local authority or VEC for more information, or check out www.studentfinance.ie You can check out your eligibility there, and also apply online for the grant. If you are on the Back to Education Allowance, then you are not eligible for the maintenance grant.

82

FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Fund for Students with Disabilities is not means tested. You can apply for the first time during any year of your studies on an approved course at further- or higher-education level. The application process for the fund does not generally start until you have enrolled in your course. Applications cannot be made directly to the fund by students. Applications are made on behalf of an eligible student by their college following an assessment of need. Colleges are also responsible for the management of the funding approved for eligible students.

Learn more about this fund directly through your college and online at www.studentfinance.ie



THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1. Why is education important for you?

2. If you have problems with literacy who can you contact?

3. There are many different training organisations in Ireland.
Can you name any of them?

4. If you do not want to go to college what other options are there
for you to learn some new skills and get training for a job?

5. What is a PLC course?

6. When applying to college, who do you apply to?

7. What is BTEA?

Education and Training

8. Name two important websites dealing with funding?

Other Notes



| **EMPLOYMENT**

“

**Far and away the best prize that
life has to offer is the chance
to work hard at work worth
doing. (Theodore Roosevelt)**

”



EMPLOYMENT

Knowing where to get information on suitable employment opportunities and how to follow up on them is key to finding the right job for you. Before you start looking for work, you should check out the 'Education & Training' section of this guide to help you figure out what you want to do, and what skills you might need to be able to apply for the jobs you want.

87

Where to Look

SOLAS Employment Services, which is taking over the duties of FÁS (this may take some time, and until the change is finished, FÁS and SOLAS might overlap in certain areas, so check the online version of this guide to get the latest updates in this area).



Contact your local SOLAS/FÁS office or check out www.fas.ie
Notice boards in local shops.
Local newspapers.
Recruitment agencies.

APPLYING FOR A JOB

Once you have spotted the job that you would like to apply for, you will need to spend some time preparing your application. Contact your local jobs club i.e. FÁS, which will help you with writing covering letters, filling out application forms, updating your CV. and preparing for interviews.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR CV.

- Always type your CV. Don't send in a handwritten one as it looks unprofessional.
- Make your information easy to read by putting a space between each section.
- Be brief – 1 or 2 pages. You can leave out things that are of low importance.
- Use bullet points to make what you're saying easy to read.
- If you can, try and find a way to show off the skills you've learned rather than just say what you did (eg. waitressing teaches you communication skills, how to deal with members of the public, prioritisation, and how to work under pressure).
- Get someone else to read your CV before you send it in. Check for spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes and make sure it's easy to follow. Lots of employers will simply ignore a CV that has spelling mistakes in it.
- At the end of your CV you should state that references are available if required. You don't need to include contact details for referees on the CV.



REFERENCES

References should be from responsible people who know you well and can tell an employer about what you have done in the past. They are usually your last 2 employers, but if you haven't worked before, you can use a teacher or your principal from school or college. Don't be tempted to get a friend or family member to act as a referee. It should be someone whom you know in some kind of professional capacity.

Sample CV:

Ms Jane Kelly

Address: 10 Main Street, Swords, Co. Dublin

Phone: (087) 0000 000

Email: 000000@000000.com

Education

2000–2002 Youthreach, Main Street, Swords Co Dublin

Leaving Certificate Results (390 points overall)

Work Experience

2003-2004 Sales Advisor, Arnotts, Dublin.

Duties involved customer assistance and advice, stocktaking, ordering of relevant stock from warehouse, arranging stock, arranging and displaying sales items, till operating (handling cash and till floats), as well as answering telephone enquiries. I was also responsible for my own particular sections of the department and had to ensure they met with the approval of my managers.

2003 Waitress, Italian Restaurant, Dame Street, Dublin.

Duties included greeting and seating customers, taking orders and waiting tables. I also sometimes had the responsibility of closing the restaurant and cashing up at the end of the day.

Previous Work Experience

Babysitting a 4-year-old child. Duties included assisting with child care, school runs and preparing meals.

Career Objectives

- I hope to continue to establish a successful career in the retail industry and one day open my own fashion boutique.

Interests and Activities

GAA: I played in an intra-league womens league in Ballina. I also played for 7 years as a teenager with a local team where I captained the team for 2 seasons.

Rugby: I played rugby for a local womens team for two years.

Music: I have a keen interest in music. I taught myself to play guitar at the age of 15.

References on request.

Employment

You can look up websites to find lots more samples and also more tips and hints to write a good CV and job application. A really good website for CV preparation and also for getting ready for interviews is **www.cvsandinterviews.ie**.

The screenshot shows the website 'CVs and Interviews' with a blue header. Below the header, there's a section titled 'Archive for the 'CV Format' Category'. On the left, there's a link to 'Older Entries'. The main content area features a post titled 'Does your CV look good?' dated Wednesday, August 12th, 2009. Below the title is a 'Download' button and a 'PDF Reader' icon. A banner for 'Microsoft's Official Office Qualifications for 50% Less' is displayed. The post text discusses the importance of CV visual appearance and lists three key ingredients: Content, Information Positioning, and Visual Appearance. It also includes a quote about the difference words make and a link to 'Cv Writing' with a sub-header 'Looking for a Career Change? Find Options & Opportunities for Free.' and a URL 'www.BetterCareerSearch.com'. On the right side, there are two lists: 'Pages' and 'Categories'. The 'Pages' list includes links like 'About', 'Career Coach Ireland', 'Career Coaching', 'CV Preparation Advice', 'CV Service Ireland', 'Interview Coach Ireland', 'Interview Coaching', and 'TIPS'. The 'Categories' list includes links like 'Career Coach', 'Career Workshop', 'Competency Based Interviews', 'Counter-Offers', 'Cover Letter', 'CV', 'CV Examples', 'CV Expert', 'CV Format', 'CV Layout', 'CV Tips', 'CV Writing Service', 'Interview Coach', 'Interview Coaching', 'Interview Questions', 'Interview Skills', 'Interview Techniques', 'Interview Tips', 'Interviews', and 'Job Hunting'.

CVs and Interviews
CVs and Interviews

Archive for the 'CV Format' Category

• Older Entries

Does your CV look good?
Wednesday, August 12th, 2009

Download PDF Reader

Microsoft's Official Office Qualifications for 50% Less Save 50%

How important is the visual appearance of your CV?

I believe there are 3 key ingredients to an impact CV – Content, Information Positioning and Visual Appearance. I rank Visual Appearance number 3 and least important of the 3 points. Content is number 1 and information positioning is number 2.

CV Writing – What do I mean by content?

"It's amazing the difference words make. I feel so confident looking over my CV and I hardly

Cv Writing
Looking for a Career Change? Find Options & Opportunities for Free.
www.BetterCareerSearch.com

Pages

- About
- Career Coach Ireland
- Career Coaching
- CV Preparation Advice
- CV Service Ireland
- Interview Coach Ireland
- Interview Coaching
- TIPS

Categories

- Career Coach
- Career Workshop
- Competency Based Interviews
- Counter-Offers
- Cover Letter
- CV
- CV Examples
- CV Expert
- CV Format
- CV Layout
- CV Tips
- CV Writing Service
- Interview Coach
- Interview Coaching
- Interview Questions
- Interview Skills
- Interview Techniques
- Interview Tips
- Interviews
- Job Hunting

Job Clubs/Local Employment Schemes provide training to assist people who are ready for work, helping them to develop skills they can use to find a job. Social welfare payments are not affected and anyone who is ready to work and is between 16 and 64 years of age can join a job club.

Employment

Job Clubs and Employment Schemes will help you with such things as:

- Developing job-seeking skills and techniques such as preparing a CV and application letter.
- Making your own individual job search plan.
- Preparing for interviews.
- Developing a network of contacts, which can be of help in getting work.
- Developing your communication skills.
- Identifying individual strengths and skills and matching them to local job opportunities.
- Provide access to facilities: phones, computer, email, newspapers, etc.

91

For further information about job clubs, contact your local SOLAS/FÁS office and www.fas.ie

Tackling Interviews

Having found the job you wish to apply for and sent your CV to the employer, you may then be called for an interview. When it comes to the interview it's important that you are prepared.



Employment

- Get to know some information about the company or service before your interview.
- Try and find someone who will do a practice interview with you to help your nerves.
- Have some questions ready to ask to show how serious and interested you are in the work.
- Dress smartly — you want to make a good impression.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early.
- Be clear about why you want the job, i.e. what interests you, and why you would be a good candidate for it.
- You will be asked questions about your CV so know the information. Be prepared and able to answer questions on everything.
- Be positive, be confident and smile!

92

BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

Volunteering means giving your time to do something useful for your community and society. In return you get the satisfaction of time and effort well spent. It can also benefit your life in lots of ways:

- Volunteering looks great on your CV and can improve your job prospects.
- It can influence your choice of careers.
- Help you to meet new people and make new friends.
- Learn about something new and explore different interests.
- Build your confidence.
- Open up new opportunities and new challenges.

Employment

- You can develop skills that equip you for life and work.
- You can have a lot of fun!

There are so many different ways to volunteer. Some programmes require special skills or particular talents. Most just require energy and enthusiasm to help make a difference. Spend some time researching different charities before you decide to invest your time helping them. Find volunteering opportunities that you feel passionate about.

Check out

Volunteering Ireland:	www.volunteeringireland.ie
Volunteer Centres Ireland:	www.volunteer.ie
Volunteer with VSI (Voluntary Service International):	www.vsi.ie/volunteer
VSO Ireland:	www.vso.ie

93



Volunteers teaching a senior how to use a computer.

Employment

As well as volunteering, there is the **National Internship Scheme**. You can apply for internships at various companies, while keeping your benefits, and get some great experience in your chosen field for 6–9 months. You must be claiming the Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit or signing for social insurance credits for 3 out of the last 6 months to apply for the scheme. More information is available from www.jobbridge.ie



94

STARTING WORK

Starting a new job can be a wonderful experience. Sure, all of us are nervous about stepping into a new environment and meeting and dealing with new people. But that's what's so exciting about it: everything is new! It's normal to be nervous and it can take a few days or weeks to get used to the job and other staff. Other staff will usually already know each other and have a level of comfort with each other, but remember that everyone was new at some point and went through feeling shy and awkward in their first week.

Here are some tips to make your first few days easier:

- Research the company/place of work to understand what they do and what is expected of you.
- Plan what you're going to wear during the first week of work. Remember, you'll want to wear your most conservative outfits to start off, until you figure out what's appropriate and what isn't. It's better to be overdressed when starting a new job than be too casual.
- Be friendly, professional and confident even if you don't yet feel it — this will come in time.

Employment

- Introduce yourself to everyone and don't be afraid to ask questions as it's the quickest way to learn.
- Remember that employers have certain expectations: that you turn up smartly dressed, on time, have a good attitude and work hard.

PAYING TAX

When starting a new job remember you have to pay tax on your wages.

Step 1.

Apply for a PPS number (see below).

Step 2.

Complete **Form 12A** and send it to your local Revenue office. You can download this form at www.revenue.ie

Your Personal Public Service (PPS) number is a unique reference number that helps you to gain access to social welfare benefits, public services and information in Ireland. State agencies use PPS numbers to identify individuals. If you were born in Ireland you should already have been issued with one.

You can use your PPS number for:

- All social welfare services.
- The Free Travel Pass.
- Pupil ID.
- Public health services, including the medical card and the Drugs Payment Scheme.
- Child immunisation.
- Schemes run by the Revenue Commissioners, such as Mortgage Interest Relief.
- Housing grants.
- Driver Theory Testing and driver licences.

Employment

You can find your PPS number printed on:

- Social Services Card.
- Drugs Payment Card.
- P60 (the annual statement of pay, tax and social insurance contributions you receive from your employer).
- P45 (the statement of tax and pay to date you are given by your employer when you leave employment).
- Tax assessment.
- PAYE Notice of Tax Credits.
- Temporary Payment Card.

If you do not know your PPS number, contact your local social welfare office and they will find your number for you.

TYPES OF INCOME TAX

Emergency Tax

If you haven't worked before or haven't given your new boss a P45 form you'll have to pay emergency tax (you receive a P45 form from your employer when you leave a job). Emergency tax is paid for a short time, usually until you fill out and give in your forms and PPS number. You pay a higher amount than when you pay regular tax. You will get the extra money back when your tax gets sorted out.



PAYE

Pay As You Earn (PAYE) is the most common form of income tax on workers' earnings. Your employer deducts the tax you owe directly

Employment

from your wages. Your employer then pays this tax directly to the Revenue Commissioners.

PRSI

Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) is used by the government to pay for things such as social welfare payments. In general, all employers, employees and self-employed people pay PRSI. If you lose your job and have been paying PRSI you may be entitled to greater levels of benefits, such as Jobseeker's Benefit and Maternity Benefit.

USC

The Universal Social Charge (USC) must be paid by everyone whose gross income (before deductions, such as PAYE) is greater than €4,004 per year (€77 per week). It is charged at different rates depending on your income level.

If you have any questions about your tax or think you are not being taxed correctly you can contact the Revenue Commissioners.

Dublin Office: LoCall (1890) 333425, or get more information at www.revenue.ie.



EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

There are many rights you are entitled to when in employment. A full list of these, and more details, are available at www.employmentrights.ie. Here are some of the most important things you are entitled to know when you start work:

- A written statement of the terms and conditions of your work. This will usually include how pay is calculated, what the sick leave entitlements are, and the rate of pay you are earning.
- A regular payslip, which will detail your earnings and all deductions out of it, such as PAYE or pension payments.
- Entitlement to the basic minimum wage at the time.
- A maximum working week of 48 hours.
- Unpaid breaks during working hours.
- Full-time workers have the right to 4 working weeks of paid holidays per year. Part-time workers have the right to a proportion of this leave, depending on how much they have worked.

98

RUNNING YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Setting up and running your own business takes a lot of work and money to get going, but there is help available. If you've learned a trade you might want to set up your own business such as a plumbing business or hairdressers.

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA) Scheme encourages those receiving certain social welfare payments in Ireland to become self-employed. If you take part in the BTWEA scheme, you retain a percentage of your social welfare payment for up to 2 years. If you are getting Jobseeker's Benefit (JB), you may be

Employment

eligible for the STEA, which is paid instead of your JB for up to 12 months. It will end when your entitlement to JB ends.

You will have to get your head around paying tax yourself and managing your money differently — there is a lot of information out there (more than we can cover in this guide!) so check out the Citizens Information leaflet on being self-employed: www.citizensinformation.ie to start with. SOLAS/FÁS can also give you some more information on setting up your own business.

WORKING PART-TIME

Not all jobs in Ireland will be full-time (which means working 39 hours per week). If you work less hours than this, you are a part-time worker. You have the same rights as a full-time worker, and you are protected under the Protection of Employees (Part Time Work) Act of 2001.

The purpose of this Act is to make sure that if you are being treated differently than a full-time employee, it is for specific reasons and not simply because you are working part-time.

You may be able to keep some of your Jobseeker's Allowance if you work part-time (less than 3 days a week), or if your full-time hours are cut to part-time. You should speak to someone in your local social welfare office.

UNEMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

People aged 18 and over and who are unemployed in Ireland can apply for either the Jobseeker's Benefit or the Jobseeker's Allowance. You must be available for work and actively seeking employment.

Employment

For more information on the full list of entitlements if you are unemployed, check out the Department of Social Protection's website for details: www.welfare.ie

The Difference Between Jobseeker's Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance:

Jobseeker's Benefit

Jobseeker's Benefit is based on your social insurance record (PRSI contributions). If you want to qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit you must be available for full-time work. If you don't qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit you may qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance.

Jobseeker's Allowance

You may get Jobseeker's Allowance if you don't qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit or if you have used up your entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit. In some cases, if you are only entitled to a reduced rate of Jobseeker's Benefit you may be better off on Jobseeker's Allowance. Jobseeker's Allowance is means tested.

(Means = the money and other resources someone has to live on.) Recent changes to the levels of Jobseeker's Allowance do not apply to care leavers. Contact your aftercare worker or social worker about this.

Visit your local social welfare office for more information on how much you may be entitled to and check out www.welfare.ie.

THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1. Where is your local FÁS office?

2. Why would attending a job club benefit you?

3. How can you prepare for an interview?

4. Even though working as a volunteer means no pay, what do you gain from it?

5. If working full-time, what is the maximum amount of hours you can work?

6. If working and claiming social welfare, what is the maximum amount of hours you can work?

7. Where can you find your PPS number?

8. What are the different types of income tax?

Employment

9. If unemployed what benefits, if any, are you entitled to?

10. What are the differences between the two benefit types mentioned in this section?

102

Other Notes



| STAYING SAFE

“Safety doesn’t happen by accident.
(Anonymous)”



STAYING SAFE

STAYING SAFE

You've heard the saying 'safety first'. It's an old saying, but a useful one. It can be hard to balance staying safe with seizing opportunities. It's important to keep your mind and body safe from harm. You should see our 'Mind, Body and Soul' section for tips on how to keep your mind, body and soul safe from mental and physical health problems. This section talks about keeping yourself safe in different places and the steps you can take to make yourself safe if you need to.

105

AT HOME

Whether you live on your own or with family or housemates, you should always be aware of the safety issues in your home. There are some simple steps to take to make sure you and your belongings stay safe.

Make sure all doors and windows are secure. Lock your front door from the inside. Close the curtains after dark.

Always keep your keys in your possession. Never hide them over doors, under mats or any other obvious hiding places. It's a good idea to give a spare key to someone you know very well and trust in case you ever lock yourself out. Report lost or stolen keys as soon as possible and get your locks changed.



Staying Safe

Whenever possible, call someone to let them know you've arrived home.

- If someone knocks on the door, check who it is. If you don't know them well, don't let them in.
- If you have a back door, always lock it before you go to the front door. Some thieves work in pairs — one will keep you talking at the front door while the other tries to enter by the back door.
- Don't tell strangers that you're alone in the house.
- Buy a smoke alarm and don't forget to change the batteries.
- Turn off all switches, hair straighteners/curlers and any other electrical appliances when you're not using them.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- If the gas man or a workman calls, ask to see ID, and if you weren't expecting them, or didn't call them, don't let them in. Call their company to make sure they are genuine

106



Staying Safe

- Know where to find the phone numbers of people to call in an emergency.

If you smell gas, leave the house immediately and call Bord Gáis on (1850) 205050.

OUT AND ABOUT

When you're out and about, whether it's during the day or at night, you need to be aware of who is around you and what they are doing. It's important to have a plan in case something goes wrong when you are out or if you get into difficulty.

- Does someone know where you're going, who you're with and where you're going to be?
- Meet friends in a public place so you're not hanging round too long on your own.
- Do you have extra cash on you for emergencies?
- Have you planned how you're getting home?
- Don't drink or take drugs and drive.
- Don't accept a lift from people you don't know well and don't get in a car if the driver has been drinking/taking drugs. Take a taxi or bus instead.
- If you end up alone and have to walk, look confident and walk quickly and with purpose.
- Be aware of your surroundings and avoid out-of-the way shortcuts.
- Have your house keys ready before you get to the door.





At the ATM

- ATMs are places where it is very easy to get into difficulty. Almost everyone who goes to an ATM will be carrying cash on them afterwards, and thieves know this.
- If possible, use an ATM inside a bank or somewhere else indoors.
- Only use ATMs in highly visible areas and avoid using the ATM at night. But if you must, use one in a well-lit area and take a friend along with you for safety.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you.
- Never write your PIN number down, and don't keep the information in your wallet or purse. Memorise it.
- If there are other people close by waiting to use the ATM, do not let them see you input your PIN.
- Never withdraw large sums of cash at once from the ATM. This may attract the attention of thieves.
- If you spot someone suspicious hanging around the ATM, don't use it and find another.

Staying Safe

- Leave after withdrawing your money from the ATM, put it straight into your wallet or purse. Don't stand counting the money.
- Don't forget to take your card and receipt when leaving the ATM, and put them straight into your wallet or purse.

PHONE AND ONLINE SAFETY

- Did you know you can call 999 or 112 in an emergency even if you have no credit?
- Don't give out personal information, including whether you are alone in your home.
- Password protect your phone and home computer laptop.
- Be wary of surveys or 'wrong number' calls.
- Only give your number out to people you know and trust.
- Save the number of someone who can be contacted in an emergency under the name ICE in your phone — this stands for In Case of Emergency. The emergency services will look for this number in your phone if something happens to you.
- Be aware before sending private pictures that they may be seen by people other than those you had intended.
- Don't agree to meet strangers you have met online in person without telling someone else where you're going to be. It's a good idea the first time you're meeting someone from online to arrange for a friend to call you at a certain time. This will give you a way to leave if you are feeling uncomfortable, and also for safety — if you don't answer your phone, they will know something is wrong and can contact the Gardaí if they are worried for you.



Staying Safe

- ▶ If you receive an abusive, obscene or threatening phone call just hang up. Don't listen to see if the caller's still there and don't say anything. An emotional reaction is just what the caller wants. If the calls continue, tell the Gardaí. Keep a record of the date, time and content of the call as possible evidence.

STAYING SAFE IN A RELATIONSHIP

Domestic violence is the physical, emotional, sexual or mental abuse of one person by another, with whom they have an intimate or family relationship.

If you're in an abusive relationship or live with domestic violence then you need to get help and decide how best to escape from the situation.

- 1 Talk to someone you trust. If you don't tell someone about the abuse, it **will** continue.
- 2 Go to the Gardaí. They can make sure that you and other family members are safe from harm.
- 3 Plan how you're going to leave.

Make a plan to help you safely take yourself (and your children, if you have any) out of the situation. Staying with family and friends is an option but if you are worried about being found, refuges (located all over the country) can offer you emergency accommodation at any time.



GETTING HELP

Women:

The Women's Aid National Helpline is **(1800) 341900**. It's free to call this number. You can also visit their website www.womensaid.ie

The Safe Ireland website (www.safeireland.ie) has lists of refuges around the country where women and children can go to get emergency accommodation. If you don't want to go into a refuge, most organisations offer support, outreach and helpline services to women to allow them to talk over their situation and make the best decisions for them and their children.

111

Men:

AMEN provides a confidential helpline and support service for male victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Call AMEN (Monday to Friday, 9.00am–5.00pm) on (046) 902 3718. Out-of-hours service (available until 9.00pm), call (086) 794 1880.

Get information and support at www.amen.ie/



www.womensaid.ie



www.amen.ie

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Alcohol

Used sensibly, alcohol is a pleasurable, socially acceptable drug. But it's a serious problem when people start to abuse alcohol. Most of the time when people talk about drugs, they think of illegal ones. But the most abused drug is legal, and it's alcohol.

We all respond to alcohol differently, and it's important that you know your own limits, and understand how alcohol affects you as an individual.

112

Binge drinking is not just drinking continuously over a number of days or weeks — it's also drinking heavily over a short period of time (like on a night out). You might know it as: 'getting locked', 'getting hammered' or 'drinking to get drunk'.

The law: 18 is the legal age in Ireland to buy alcohol. It is illegal for a pub or shop to sell or supply alcohol to anyone under 18. It is illegal to buy alcohol for someone under 18, and it is illegal to drink alcohol if you're under 18, unless you are with your parents at home at the time and have their permission.

THE FACTS

Alcohol is a depressant drug so if you're feeling down alcohol will make you feel worse.

Having food in your stomach slows the rate of alcohol absorption into your bloodstream but the amount of alcohol absorbed remains unchanged.

Women absorb alcohol into their bloodstream faster and metabolise it slower than men.

Someone really drunk or high — guys as well as girls — can easily be attacked, robbed or sexually assaulted.

Staying Safe

Short-Term Effects of Alcohol	Long-Term Effects of Alcohol
Alcohol lowers your inhibitions and can make you feel out of control and do things you wouldn't do when sober.	You can become addicted, both physically and psychologically — this is alcoholism.
When you drink too much it can cause hangovers, the shakes, depression, vomiting, injuries and memory loss.	Continuous heavy drinking has bad effects on your health — particularly liver damage.
It makes you gain weight — alcoholic drinks are full of calories. It can also cause your skin to break out in spots.	It can hurt your relationships, your work can start to slip and it can lead to depression — this can happen quicker than you might think it will.



Staying Safe

A few tips for drinking safely:

- Eat more, drink less. Avoid drinking on an empty stomach. Don't drink if you're taking medication such as antibiotics or antidepressants. Mixing the two can make you sick or even more depressed.
- Drink slowly — it's not a race and there's no rush.
- Have soft drinks in between alcoholic ones (every 2nd drink).
- If you're out, don't leave yourself vulnerable — plan your journey home.
- Drink lots of water to rehydrate, especially before you go to bed.
- Overdone it? Take a break from drinking for a while.

The Bottom Line: Drinking before the age of 18 is illegal. Drinking alcohol in moderation can, for many people, be a pleasant experience. However, you should be aware of all of the effects of alcohol, and be sensible. You can quickly become dependent on alcohol to have a good time, and that behaviour can spiral out of control.

Here are some good websites to check out:



www.drinkaware.ie/



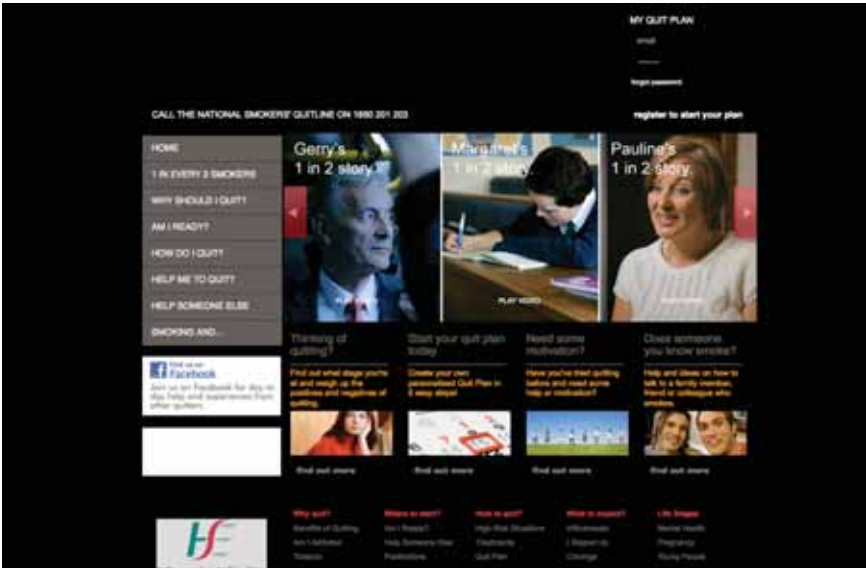
www.yourdrinking.ie/

Smoking

Smoking tobacco is legal in Ireland, except in public buildings such as pubs and cafes. People smoke cigarettes, cigars and pipes, all of which contain nicotine (which is the addictive drug), tar and other substances. Studies have shown that there can be up to 400 different chemicals in cigarettes, including carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic and different chemicals that are also found in floor cleaner, nail polish remover, pesticides and lead. A mug full of tar can build up in the lungs of a smoker per year. Smokers live, on average, 10–15 years less than non-smokers, and smoking is the main cause of the most preventable forms of cancer, such as lung and throat cancer. Smoking is also a very expensive activity, costing on average **€3,500 per smoker, per year**. Quitting smoking can be very difficult, but there are lots of people who can help you. You can talk to your GP about how to quit, or look at some of the online programmes, as well as the general information for quitting addictions in this section of the guide.

115

Some good websites to check out:



www.quit.ie/ www.cancer.ie/quitting/tips.php



116

‘Drugs’ is a common term for a range of substances that you might put into your body to change something — whether that’s your mental state or to cure an illness. Some are legal, some are illegal. All can be dangerous — even medication you have been prescribed by a doctor. Many people feel they need to use drugs to get a buzz and have a good time. If you feel like this, ask yourself: could I have a good night without them? When people think about drugs, they think about the ‘hard’ and illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine or ecstasy. However, more and more people are becoming addicted to the effects of legal drugs, including alcohol, painkillers and prescription drugs such as valium. Just because a drug is legal, doesn’t mean it’s safe to use.

‘Head Shop’ Drugs

Head shops were very common in Ireland until recently. These were unregulated shops that could sell drugs which were legal, but which mimicked the effects of harder, illegal drugs. These drugs are now illegal in Ireland. Many of the head shops have moved their business online. It is illegal to buy drugs off these websites to be delivered to Ireland.

Staying Safe

The bottom line: all drugs are potentially dangerous. With illegal drugs, we don't know who makes them, so there's no way to control or know what goes into them. Many drugs are addictive in different ways. Cannabis/hash, while not a physically addictive drug, can easily become a habit and be a 'trigger' to any underlying mental health problems. Heroin can quickly become physically addictive.

The best way to keep yourself safe is to not take these drugs at all, and to know as much as possible and be aware of the risks. Check out the websites below for more information.

drugs.ie

www.talktofrank.com

www.thesite.org/drinkanddrugs

www.spunout.ie/health/Alcohol

117



ADDICTION

No matter how much willpower you have, it is very easy to end up finding you have a problem with addiction. Most people think of addiction to drugs or alcohol, but people can be addicted to lots of behaviours that can mess up lives. Gambling, sex, drink, drugs, food — these can all become addictions that can cause huge physical, mental and financial problems in your life.

Although you may initially think that you have your habits ‘under control’, these things are highly addictive and may soon start to control you.

118

What to watch out for:

- You find you’re using a drug or alcohol more and more often.
Be careful — this is the first step to becoming dependent on it.
- All of your friends are doing it.
- You find that taking a particular drug makes you feel confident, and may help you to face a difficult situation. After a while, you need the drug to face that situation every time.
- You’re losing interest in activities that used to be important.
- You’re spending most of your money on playing Lotto or buying scratch cards.
- You’re taking big risks around your habit — drinking more and more, spending rent money on other things, having sex with strangers.
- You’re withdrawing from your family and friends.

GETTING HELP

There are lots of contacts for getting help and information on drink and drugs and addiction in the ‘Contacts’ section in the back of this guide, but here are a few useful ones to look at.

Staying Safe

National Drugs & HIV Helpline

The helpline provides confidential support and information.

Tel: (1800) 459459

Drugs Awareness Programme

The programme provides information, support and counselling in relation to drugs, substance misuse or addiction.

Tel: (01) 836 0911

Website: www.drugs.ie

Alcoholics Anonymous

AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Tel: (01) 453 8998

Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Website: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Alateen

Alateen is for young people, aged 12 to 20 years of age, who are affected by a problem drinker.

Tel: (01) 873 2699

Website: www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Narcotics Anonymous

A group of recovering addicts who have found a way to live without the use of drugs. It costs nothing to be a member; the only requirement is a desire to stop using.

Email: info@na-ireland.org your behaviour a secret from them.

Website: www.na-ireland.org

If you think you have a problem with an addiction, the first step is asking for help. There are lots of people who have gone through the same thing as you and turned things around. You can do it too.

THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1. Why is it important to lock doors and windows?

2. What should you do when you lose your keys?

3. If workmen call to your door what do you ask for firstly?

4. Who should you call in emergencies?

Out and About

1. Why is it important to avoid lifts from drivers who are under the influence?

2. Why should you keep emergency money?

3. What should you do if you notice somebody suspicious at the ATM?



Phone and Internet

1. Who should have your number?

2. If you receive abusive messages what should you do?

3. What number can you call even if you have no call credit?

4. What is an ICE number?

121

Alcohol

1. What is binge drinking?

2. If consuming alcohol, what should you be cautious about?

Other Notes



| PARENTHOOD

“

It's not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it myself.

(Joyce Maynard)

”



PARENTHOOD

Becoming a parent can be a scary time, especially if it is unplanned. You will suddenly have a lot more responsibilities than before — but you also have some new rights, too. This section of the guide talks about those rights and responsibilities, and how to enjoy being pregnant and becoming a parent, for both mums and dads.

125

Pregnancy

So you've missed your period and you think you might be pregnant. You are probably full of mixed emotions and are afraid to take a pregnancy test because that might make it real. If you had unprotected sex or your contraceptive didn't work then there's a chance you might be pregnant. The first thing you need to do is find out if you are pregnant or not.



- You can take a home pregnancy test, which you can get from your local pharmacy. If you are unsure about the test results or the test shows that you are pregnant, visit your doctor or a medical health professional.
- It's important that you talk to someone you can trust, maybe a close friend, your boyfriend, a family relative or a teacher.
- If you want to speak to someone confidentially there is lots of information, advice and support available to you.



CRISIS PREGNANCY PROGRAMME

The Crisis Pregnancy Programme funds pregnancy counselling agencies around the country. The counsellors can help you sort out your feelings about being pregnant and help you look at your future options. You can check out their website on www.positiveoptions.ie

Or you can freetext the word 'list' to 50444 for a list of free, non-judgemental, trustworthy counselling agencies.

National Pregnancy Helpline:

(1850) 495051 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm)

Call this number to make a confidential and free appointment with a non-judgemental Irish Family Planning Association Pregnancy Counsellor in a centre near you. You can also check them out on the web on www.ifpa.ie

Check out www.b4udecide.ie

126



BECOMING A PARENT — WHO WILL BE THERE TO HELP YOU?

Once you decide to have a baby, you should go to your doctor for a health check-up. Your doctor will advise you on what you need to do in the coming months. The visits to your GP and hospital during your pregnancy and two visits after the baby is born are free and provided under the Maternity and Infant Care scheme. As a young mother-to-be, you will need different services at different times.



127

GP/Family Doctor

Usually your first port of call to confirm that you are pregnant. He/she will give you personal and continuing care.

Obstetrician/Consultant

An obstetrician is the doctor in charge of your care at the maternity hospital during pregnancy and the birth of your baby.

Antenatal clinic

This is the clinic in the maternity hospital where you will go for your check-ups during pregnancy.

Antenatal Classes

These are special classes usually run by the maternity hospital to help you prepare for the birth of your baby. You usually go to the classes for about 4–6 weeks towards the end of your pregnancy. At the hospital ask if they offer classes for young parents.

Parenthood

Public Health Nurse (PHN)

The PHN or 'baby nurse' is based in your local health centre and is a great help for all new mums. The PHN will visit you when you get home from hospital with your baby. They will do regular check-ups to make sure that your baby is doing okay and give you lots of advice about feeding and caring for your baby.

Medical Social Worker

Medical social workers are based in the maternity hospital. It can be useful to check in with them as they can offer you important information and advice on money matters, form filling, birth registration, etc.

Social Welfare Officers (SWO)

The SWO is based in your local Social Welfare Office. You can apply to them for payments such as Maternity Benefit and One Parent Family payment.

DSP REPS (Formerly known as CWOs)

The Department of Social Protection's representatives formerly known as Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) are employed throughout Ireland by the Department of Social Protection. CWOs were previously employed by the Health Service Executive (HSE). They are based in health centres or DSP offices and are responsible for the day to day administration of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme, including Rent Supplement, Back to School Clothing grant and exceptional needs payments (such as a cot or buggy for the baby).



PREGNANCY — DRINKING AND SMOKING

Smoking and drinking during pregnancy is very dangerous for both mother and baby. Every time you drink alcohol when pregnant, your baby does too.

The alcohol goes through your bloodstream and passes into your baby's blood via the placenta. This can lead to brain damage, as alcohol interferes with the baby's ability to get enough oxygen to his/her brain. Babies born to mothers who drink alcohol may be born with foetal alcohol syndrome, which can cause serious physical and mental problems.

The dangerous chemicals in cigarette smoke reach your baby through their bloodstream. Less food and oxygen travels into your baby: this slows down growth and development. Your baby's lungs might be damaged by this. Call the Irish Cancer Society Quitline: (1850) 201203, and check out www.quit.ie for further information and support.



129

How To Register the Birth of your Baby

You will need to register the birth of your child no later than three months after his/her birth. Registration is a legal requirement in Ireland, and you will need a birth certificate to enrol your child in school, apply for a passport and for many other purposes (for Child Benefit you will be contacted automatically as soon as you register the birth).

You can register the birth in the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths offices. The staff of the hospital where your child was born, or of your local health centre, will be able to tell you where you can register the birth locally.

‘BABY BLUES’

If you have had a baby recently and are feeling low, weepy or that you just can't cope, you are not alone. It's a normal reaction and almost half of new mothers feel weepy for a few days after the birth. This is called postpartum depression, post-natal depression or the 'baby blues'

There are lots of people who want to help, and here are some steps you can take:

- Tell somebody that you feel low. Often just talking and knowing that someone is there to help can ease your feelings of depression.
- If you feel you cannot cope tell a close family member, friend or doctor that you need some help.

Self-help:

Eat well - little and often even if you're not hungry.

Exercise regularly - even a short walk is helpful.

Learn to recognise your needs and ask for help.

Find ways to be kind to yourself - treat yourself.

If symptoms persist, talk to your public health nurse, family doctor or hospital doctor about how you are feeling. They are there to help and support you.

BREASTFEEDING

A choice that all new mums have to make is whether or not to breastfeed their baby. The body naturally produces milk that contains everything your baby needs for the first few months of life. However, some mums don't feel comfortable breastfeeding, and indeed some mums find it very difficult. You should speak to your medical team about breastfeeding when you are in hospital, but here are some of the advantages and challenges for you to think about (adapted from the La Leche website: www.lalecheleagueireland.com).



131

Advantages	Challenges
Breast milk contains all of the right nutrients and vitamins that babies need in the right amounts.	You are completely responsible for feeding your baby. You either need to be the person feeding your child all the time or need to use a special pump to take the milk out and store it for later use.
You can save a lot of money if you breastfeed, as you do not need to buy food for the baby for a new months.	Breastfeeding can drain your energy, and also lead to some discomfort such as dry nipples.
Many new mums have found that breastfeeding burns a lot of calories, so it can help you lose any extra weight you are still carrying from your pregnancy.	Some women find it embarrassing to breastfeed in public, and in some places you may actually be asked to leave or go to the toilet to feed your child.

Parenthood

Advantages	Challenges
Breastfeeding is good for both your health and your babies. Studies have shown that women who breastfeed are less likely to develop certain cancers and babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop conditions such as asthma and skin problems.	Some women find it difficult to learn how to breastfeed, and some are unable to do so.

132 If you need help with breastfeeding or want to learn more about it, check with your GP, the staff in the hospital, or the La Leche League of Ireland, who have lots of information about breastfeeding on their website: www.lalecheleagueireland.com



TOP TIPS FOR NEW DADS

Whether or not you and your baby's mother are still together, you still play an important part in your child's life. All children need lots of love and support. You, as dad, play a big part in providing that love and support. When dads take an interest in their children's lives, they are telling them they are valued, cared for and important. Spending time with your children gives them a better chance of growing up to be happy adults.



133

Before the birth

- Be there for her: when your partner is pregnant she will need extra support and understanding.
- Offer to help out in any way you can, such as doing the food shopping and helping out around the house.
- Don't smoke around pregnant women. The smoke can slow down your baby's growth and is unhealthy for both baby and mother.
- Learn as much as you can: read the pregnancy books and attend the hospital scans and antenatal classes whenever possible so that you know, and feel connected to, what's happening.
- Get ready: if you have a car you'll need a car seat — do your research and find one that's right for you.
- If you're not living with the baby's mother, and if the baby will be spending time over at your place you need to consider what new items you will need, such as a cot, spare nappies and things like that.
- Prepare yourself for the fact that your life IS going to be changed forever and embrace it!

FINANCIAL AND WORKPLACE ENTITLEMENTS

If you are pregnant and not working:

- Visit your social welfare office to find out if you're entitled to Jobseeker's Benefit/Jobseeker's Allowance (the dole).
- Apply to your local health office to find out if you're entitled to a Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Medical Card, Rent Supplement or help with the cost of having a baby. Find your nearest local health office at www.hse.ie.
- Most single, pregnant women with a low income are eligible for a medical card so apply for one now and save on the cost of doctor's visits. Doctor visits during the pregnancy and two visits after having your baby are covered for free by the Maternity and Infant Care scheme.

If you are pregnant and working:

- You might qualify for Maternity Benefit. This depends on how much social insurance (PRSI) you've paid during the year. Learn more at www.welfare.ie.
- You should apply for Maternity Benefit at least 6 weeks before you intend to take maternity leave (time off work).
- You might also get Health and Safety Benefit or Leave if you're at risk in your job when pregnant or breastfeeding (Go to: www.citizensinformation.ie)

TIME OFF WORK:

- It doesn't matter when you started work: if you're pregnant you are entitled to maternity leave.
- To qualify for maternity leave you must be in a job where you pay social insurance (PRSI).
- You may be entitled to 26 weeks' paid leave and 16 weeks' unpaid leave. Both parents are also entitled to parental leave.
- Contact The Equality Authority (www.equality.ie) for advice on maternity leave and parental leave.
- Check out the 'My Rights & Responsibilities' section of the guide for more information on your rights as a new parent.

135

FINANCIAL ENTITLEMENTS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

As a mother or single parent you have the right to apply for financial benefits.

Child Benefit

Payable for each child under 16 years of age, or under 18 years of age if the child is in full-time education or FÁS/SOLAS Youthreach training, or has a disability. Child benefit is not means tested.

Early Childhood Care & Education Scheme (ECCE)

This scheme provides a free year of early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. In general, children are eligible for the ECCE scheme if they are aged between 3 years, 2 months and 4 years, 7 months on 1 September of the year that they will be starting.

Parenthood

Family Income Supplement (FIS)

FIS is a weekly tax-free payment that can be applied for by married or unmarried employees with children. You must have at least one child who normally lives with you or is financially supported by you. If you are getting FIS you may also be entitled to the Smokeless Fuel Allowance and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BTSCFA)

This is an allowance to help you meet the cost of uniforms and footwear for children attending school. The scheme normally operates from 1 June to 30 September each year.

Fuel Allowance

The National Fuel Scheme is intended to help households that depend on long-term social welfare payments and are unable to provide for their own heating needs. A household may receive only one Fuel Allowance. You have to meet certain criteria to apply for this allowance — check with your SWO to see if you can apply.

SPECIAL ENTITLEMENTS FOR LONE PARENTS

One Parent Family Payment

One Parent Family Payment is a payment for men and women in Ireland who are bringing children up without the support of a partner. To get this payment you must meet certain conditions and it is means tested. If you are divorced or unmarried, you must also have tried to get maintenance from the child's other parent. If you get a One Parent Family Payment you may also be eligible for: Fuel Allowance, Family Income Supplement, the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme or a medical card.

MAINTENANCE RULES:

Unmarried parents:

Don't have to pay each other maintenance but both parents have a responsibility for the maintenance of their children.

Separated or divorced parents:

Are responsible for the maintenance of their children and may have maintenance responsibilities in respect of each other, depending on the terms of the separation or divorce.

Visit www.welfare.ie or www.citizensinformation.ie for more information on your financial entitlements.

137

HANDLING PARENTING ARRANGEMENTS IF NOT TOGETHER ANYMORE

When parents split up it is painful for parents and children alike. Splitting up with a partner is made more stressful as parents make efforts to co-parent their children while living separately. Remember that in most circumstances it is much better for children if both parents are actively involved in their lives.

Important Terms to Know:

Guardianship is having the right to make decisions about your baby – where your baby lives, what religion s/he has, what school s/he'll attend, consenting to medical treatment, applying for a passport, etc.

Custody is who your baby/child lives with.

Access is visiting your baby/child or having contact with her/him when you are not living with your child.

Maintenance is a payment to the other parent towards the cost of rearing your child.

Parenthood

There are two ways of working out parenting arrangements where parents find they cannot come to an agreement between themselves:

Mediation

Mediation is sitting down with a trained, independent person who can help you to talk to each other and work out good decisions together about your child that are in your child's best interest. A free and confidential mediation service is available.



Contact the Family Support Agency at (01) 634 4320 or on the web at www.fsa.ie.

Going to Court

This is to be avoided if possible as tensions can run very high. However, in some cases this is the only option. Family law is the area of law that deals with families and covers areas such as separation, guardianship, access, custody and divorce.

Family law courts are not open to the general public as hearings are held in private. Only parents and witnesses are allowed in. Either parent can go to the court clerk in the local district court and start the process. (You must have an address for the other parent.)

Legal Aid Board — seek legal advice by contacting your local law centre (details on website).

Tel: (1890) 615200
Website: www.legalaidboard.ie

FLAC — offers free legal advice services.

Tel: (01) 874 5690
Website: www.flac.ie

Aim Family Services — Offers a confidential family law information service.

Tel: (01) 670 8363
Website: www.aimfamilyservices.ie

See the 'My Rights & Responsibilities' section of this guide for more information on legal issues.

RIGHTS OF UNMARRIED FATHERS EXPLAINED

Becoming a father for the first time brings you into a whole new world. The following section helps explain what rights an unmarried father has in respect of his child.

The most common mistake that young fathers make is thinking that having their name recorded on their child's birth certificate gives automatic legal rights in respect of his child. It doesn't. It simply means that you acknowledge that you are the child's father. Under Irish law only fathers married to the mother of their child have automatic rights.

Guardianship

Parents can make informal arrangements regarding access and maintenance but these arrangements are not subject to legal enforcement. With the agreement of the mother, the father can legally become a joint guardian. Both parents must sign a document called a statutory declaration in the presence of a peace commissioner, commissioner for oaths or notary public. Otherwise, the father should apply to the local district court for guardianship rights.

Parenthood

Guardianship rights can be removed from fathers if the court decides it is in the child's best interest.

These rights cannot be removed from the mother unless the child is placed for adoption.

Marriage and Guardianship

If you marry the mother of your child you automatically become a joint guardian of your child with the mother. These rights don't change should the mother marry someone else, unless they jointly adopt the child.

140

PARENTING AND FAMILY SUPPORT

There are a number of services that can help you around parenting and managing being a family, whether that's a family living together or not.

Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)

The IFPA is Ireland's leading sexual health charity providing sexual health services, counselling and education.

Website: www.ifpa.ie

One Family

One Family provides support to all members of one-parent families.

LoCall Info Line: (1890) 662212

Website: www.onefamily.ie

Treoir

Provides accurate, confidential and free information to parents who are not married to each other and to those involved with them.

Parenthood

Get information on: registering the birth of your baby, social welfare entitlements, legal issues such as custody and access, the importance of both parents in the lives of their children, passport applications, fathers' rights, grandparents' rights and lots more.

LoCall: (1890) 252084

Website: www.treoir.ie

Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP)

Helps young parents aged under 20 years of age and, generally, supports them until their children are 2 years of age. TPSP can offer support and advice to suit your individual situation: pregnancy, health, relationships, accommodation, social welfare entitlements, education and training, child development, parenting, childcare and anything else you are concerned about as a young parent. In some cases financial support may be available. TPSP can also help you to get to know other young parents in your area

TPSP is part of Treoir, so you can contact them for more details.

LoCall: (1890) 252084

Website: www.treoir.ie

141

Open (representing lone parenting groups)

Tel: (01) 814 8860

Website: www.oneparent.ie

Unmarried and Separated Parents of Ireland

Offers support to parents who are unmarried or separated. They offer weekly support meetings and a support service to assist families through separation.

Website: www.uspi.ie/

Parenthood

Useful Parenting Websites:

A great guide for new and experienced parents:
www.rollercoaster.ie/

Brilliant resources for new and expecting dads:
www.newdadssurvivalguide.com
www.dad.ie/



Notes



Notes



MIND, BODY AND SOUL

“

The greatest wealth is health.

(Virgil)

”

“

**There is only one person who could ever
make you happy, and that person is you.**

(David Burns, Intimate Connections)

”



Mind, Body and Soul

Balancing the needs of your body, mind and soul is key to being happy and content in who you are and to realising your full potential. These elements need to work in harmony to create a healthy balance in our lives.

147

MIND

If you had something wrong with your physical health, such as a sore arm or flu, you'd go to the doctor and get it sorted, right? Well, the same applies to your mental health



too. Having good mental health allows us to get the most out of spending time with loved ones and friends, and it helps us through difficult times. *It's normal to feel lonely or overwhelmed sometimes*, especially as you enter a new phase in your life. Everyone goes through it and you can get through it. In the same way that keeping fit and staying active is good for our bodies, talking about what's bothering us with friends is good for the mind.

Be Happy

- Spend quality time with the important people in your life.
- Get active — exercise releases endorphins that make us feel better.

Mind, Body and Soul



- Find things that interest you and try to meet new people who are into the same things you are — join local clubs, sports teams.
- Expand your horizons and try something new — take a course, become a volunteer, join your local library/football team.
- Spend time doing something you really enjoy — it can be anything from playing video games to reading a book.

Beat Stress

- Pause and take a deep breath.
- Do one thing at a time.
- Prioritise. Put jobs in order of importance and try to plan ahead instead of doing everything at the last minute.
- Take time to unwind — even if it's just for 10 minutes. Do something relaxing that you enjoy.
- Watch your diet. Too much alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fats make it more difficult for your body to cope with stress.
- Exercise regularly - this will cheer you up and make it easier to deal with everyday situations.

Feel Better



We all feel down or in a bad mood sometimes when things aren't going so well. Usually things pick up again and we get back to feeling like our old selves in no time. While feeling down only lasts for a short while, depression affects you for at least 2 weeks and can extend for far longer. Depression is a serious medical condition that affects your behaviour, your thinking, your emotions and physical health over time.

149

Sounds scary, but the good news is that talking about how you're feeling can be a great help. Talk to a friend and an adult you trust about what's bothering you. Talk to your GP about getting some help. Getting help may include talking to a counsellor about how you're feeling or getting some medication, or both.

Talk About It

There are lots of people who want to help if you need to talk — not just your family and friends but professionals who listen to people for a living. If you're worried that talking about what's on your mind will upset or worry the people closest to you, try talking to a counselling service. They're trained not to judge you, and by this stage they have heard everything — nothing going on in your life will surprise or shock them! Just having someone to listen can really help if you're feeling down or you need to work out a solution to a problem.

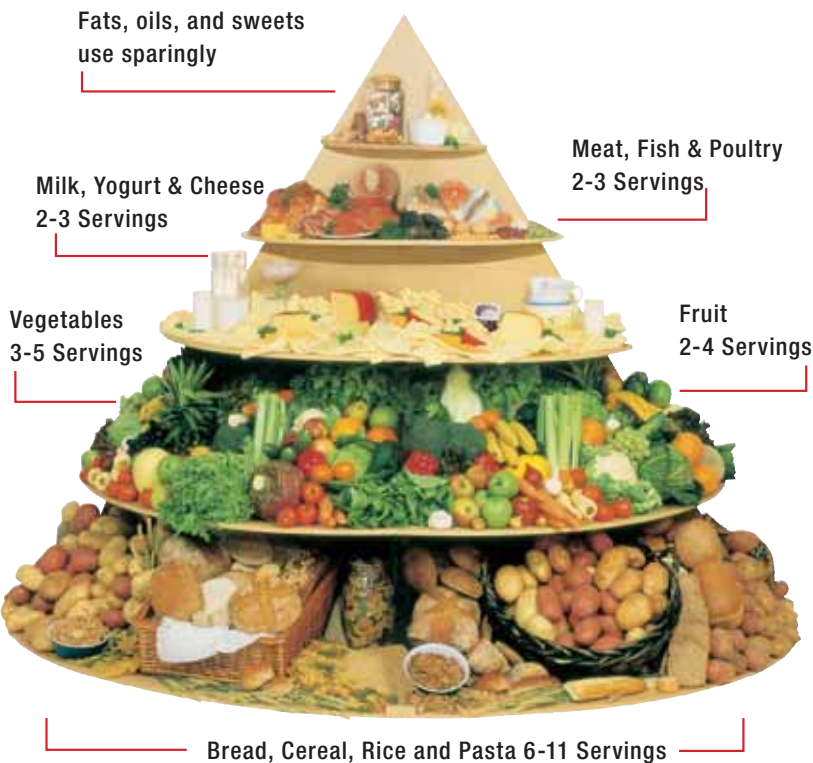
There are lots of free and low-cost counselling services in Ireland, and there are lots of places you can go for support if you're feeling down or depressed. A list of these, with contact details, is at the back of this guide. You can also have a look at the different sections of this guide on specific issues to see if there's something you can do or get help with (such as addiction, relationship problems, lack of money, and stuff like that).

BODY

Good health is one of those things we tend to take for granted. Until you are sick, your good health goes unnoticed. In this section, we will look at different aspects of maintaining a healthy body.

A Healthy Diet

By making a few small changes to your diet, you can make a massive difference to the health of your heart. The ‘food pyramid’ below is a good way to start making sure you eat the right things in the right amounts. It will help your body get the right nutrients it needs every day.



Mind, Body and Soul

The 'food pyramid' is a good basic way to look at your diet and figure out if you're eating the right things in the right amounts every day. According to the pyramid, you should be eating lots of cereals and 'bulky' foods such as rice, bread and pasta every day. Then around 5 or 6 servings of fruit and vegetables, and less of each type of food as you move up towards snacks such as crisps and chocolate, which you should only eat sparingly throughout the day.

Cooking at home is a great way to eat healthier foods and to save money — cooking is a lot cheaper than getting take-aways! There are lots of places you can go to get easy, cheap recipes. You can pick up cookbooks from bookshops for a few euro. You can also get great recipes online, on sites such as www.cheapcooking.com.

151

Top Tips

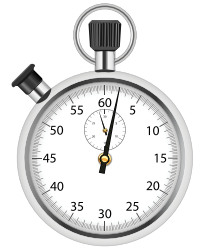
- If you've made a bit too much food, don't throw it away. Most foods (except fish) will keep for up to 2 days in the fridge and can be used again. Allow food to cool before storing in the fridge or freezer until needed.
- Why not double up the quantities of a recipe, with 'leftovers' in mind? Freeze half of it and have it later in the month.
- Don't reheat fish, and don't reheat anything more than once. Make sure you heat leftovers through until they are piping hot.
- Make sure you eat 3 healthy meals a day.
- Keep snacks between meals to a minimum.
- Don't be too hard on yourself and give up all your favourite foods. The secret to maintaining a healthy diet is to enjoy what you eat and to eat a variety of foods. A healthy diet is all about getting the balance right.



Regular exercise

Why bother exercising?

- It helps you manage your weight.
- It makes you feel happier.
- It can help you meet new people by joining a gym/sports club.
- And - it's fun!



In order to see the best results you need to do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity up to 5 times a week.

Simple guidelines to make the most of exercising:

Take it slowly — if you're new to regular exercise, don't overdo it.

Start with activities that you already know and are comfortable with. Go for a walk.

Start slowly (warm up) and ease off towards the end (warm down).

Stay within your comfort zone — you should be able to talk comfortably while you're exercising.

Listen to how your body feels — you should feel a little tired at the end but not exhausted. Drink plenty of water before, during and after activity.

Activities you might like to try:

Walking, cycling, running, football, rugby, gaelic football, hurling, camogie, swimming, tennis, basketball . . .
the list is endless so get to it!

GETTING PLENTY OF REST

We all know sleep is important but getting enough sleep is the key. It's the time your body and brain use to restore, rejuvenate and re-energise so you look and feel better after a good night's sleep.



Quick Tips for a Good Night's Sleep:

- Get some natural sunlight every day.
- Take plenty of exercise during the day but avoid work-outs too late in the evening.
- Avoid caffeine and cigarettes, which will make you feel more awake.
- Stop work at least an hour before going to bed.
- Have a warm bath and listen to some relaxing music.
- If you haven't dropped off after twenty minutes get up and do something else.

153



MEDICAL HELP

From the age of 16 you can register with your own GP (General Practitioner or family doctor). Having your own GP is important as they can keep a copy of your medical history and provide services to medical card holders free of charge. Medical cards allow people to access doctors, hospitals, community health services and dental services and to receive prescriptions free of charge or for a small fee. To attend a GP in Ireland as a medical card patient, you must first register with their practice. If you don't qualify for a medical card you may still be eligible for a GP visit card. This entitles you to free GP visits but you pay for the cost of your prescriptions. You can get the application form and a list of participating GPs from your local health centre (the contact details for these are in the back of this guide).



154

FIRST AID

Learning some basic first aid can help you to know how to react to everyday accidents — and what not to do. It is important to know first aid so that you can be a help to yourself or others who may be injured. Getting to know some basic first aid doesn't take long but can help to save lives and build your confidence. It is also possible to take courses in workplace first aid and more advanced courses. First aid training looks great on a CV, and many places favour hiring people with first aid training.

There are many programmes to learn basic first aid. Here are some useful websites:

Dublin: www.firstaidforeveryone.ie

Cork: www.corkredcross.org

Galway: www.firstaid.ie

Limerick: www.limerickredcross.org

SEXUAL HEALTH

Good sexual health means making sure you have the knowledge, skills and ability to make informed sexual choices and act responsibly to protect your health and the health of others.

Something to think about...

Using contraception reduces your chances of pregnancy, and some types also help lessen the chance of getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Your family doctor, family planning clinic or local health centre can give you information and advice about the right contraception for you.

155

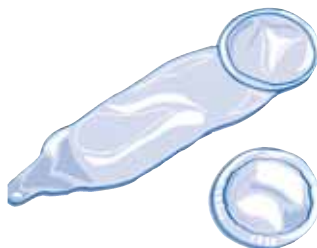
Below are some of the most popular and effective methods of contraception.

POPULAR TYPES OF CONTRACEPTION

Barrier Methods

Barrier methods are the only methods of contraception that help to stop you getting an STI. Other methods such as the pill will help to stop you becoming pregnant, but you can still catch an infection if you have unprotected sex. Barrier methods of contraception are worn by one or both people during sex and act as a barrier to stop semen entering the other person to either spread disease or cause pregnancy.

The **male condom** is also known as a prophylactic. You may know it as a 'rubber' or a 'johnny.' It is highly effective at preventing pregnancy and the spread of STIs when used correctly.



Mind, Body and Soul

The female condom is a thin, flexible plastic tube that is worn inside the vagina. A soft ring at the closed end of the tube covers the cervix during intercourse and holds it inside the vagina. Another ring at the open end of the tube stays outside the vagina. It prevents the spread of STIs.



Dental dams are sheets of latex that should be used when having oral sex with females. They prevent the spread of STIs and can be bought in some pharmacies and most 'adult' shops.

156

The cervical cap is a rubber cap that fits over the cervix, stopping the sperm from entering the uterus. The cervical cap can be placed inside the vagina hours or even days before having sex.



The diaphragm is a rubber cap that looks like a cervical cap. It is inserted in the vagina and placed over the cervix. The diaphragm prevents pregnancy by holding spermicidal jelly or cream against the cervix and preventing the sperm from reaching the uterus. The diaphragm can be 95% effective at stopping pregnancy if used properly. It does not protect against many STIs.



HORMONAL/NON-BARRIER METHODS

Hormonal and non-barrier methods use hormones to lessen the likelihood of a woman getting pregnant. They do this in different ways. It is up to the female to use this method of contraception. Hormonal contraceptives **DO NOT** work in any way to stop the spread of STIs. They are not 100% effective, and should be used with a barrier method of contraception where possible.

Mind, Body and Soul

The pill is a tablet containing two female hormones — oestrogen and progestogen. These two hormones stop you from ovulating (producing an egg) each month. And if you don't ovulate, you won't get pregnant. There are many different types of pill. If you take it exactly as prescribed, then its effectiveness at stopping pregnancy is likely to be **almost** 100%.

The contraceptive patch also contains oestrogen and progestogen. It sticks to the skin and can be placed on the stomach, thigh, buttocks or upper arm. You wear a new patch each week for 3 weeks, followed by a week's break.

The injection contains progestogen. It is given by a doctor or nurse once every 12 weeks. The contraceptive injection is very reliable when used properly.

The implant is a small, soft plastic rod containing progestogen and is inserted in your upper arm with minor surgery carried out by a trained doctor. The progestogen is released in tiny doses and the implant prevents pregnancy for three years. It can be removed at any time by minor surgery.

Emergency contraception, the morning after pill, is a prescription drug used to reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex. Multiple pills are taken in two doses. The first dose may be taken up to 72 hours (3 days) after having unprotected sex, and the second dose should be taken 12 hours after the initial dose. The morning after pill is available from GPs, your local family planning clinic and Boots pharmacies.

157



Worried about an unexpected pregnancy?

For free, non-judgemental and trustworthy crisis pregnancy counselling, text LIST to 50444 or visit www.ppositiveoptions.ie
You should also check out the 'Parenthood' section of this guide for more information.



SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS/ DISEASES (STIs)



Fact: The only contraception that provides any protection against STIs is a condom. Condoms protect against most but not all STIs

CHLAMYDIA is the most common curable STI. It infects the cervix in women, and the penile urethra in men. Its most frequent symptoms are pain during sex and discharge from the penis or vagina. However, the reason chlamydia is so common is that most people who get chlamydia don't have symptoms for weeks, months or even years. If untreated it can lead to infertility in women.

HERPES is a viral STI that comes in two forms, HSV1 and HSV2. HSV1 is most often associated with cold sores, and HSV2 is most often associated with genital sores. However, it is possible to transmit herpes from the mouth to the genitals, and vice versa. Herpes symptoms can be treated with antiviral drugs, but the virus cannot be cured.

GENITAL WARTS are painless lumps that appear on the genital area and increase in time if untreated. They are transmitted through sexual contact with an infected partner and can be cleared up by applying special cream to the affected area.

GONORRHOEA, known as ‘the clap’, is another common bacterial STI. In general, it infects the same organs as chlamydia and has similar long-term effects. Symptoms of gonorrhoea include burning when urinating and, in men, white, yellow or green discharge from the penis. Just as with chlamydia, however, many people with gonorrhoea don’t have symptoms. It is treated with antibiotics.

HIV is the virus associated with AIDS. It can only be transmitted by an exchange of bodily fluids — including semen, vaginal secretions, breast milk and blood. It cannot be transmitted by casual contact. Currently, most people with HIV are treated with a combination of drugs. Although this cannot cure the disease, it can reduce the likelihood that it will progress to AIDS.

If you are gay or lesbian, or have sex with people of your own gender, there are lots of myths around contraception and sexual health. Here are a few.

Myth	Truth
Lesbians can’t catch STIs	Women who sleep with other women can catch all the same STIs as everyone else, such as gonorrhoea, crabs, genital warts and HPV (which is what is thought to cause cervical cancer). Women can pass these infections through skin-to-skin contact, but also through sharing toys without using condoms. Women who have sex with other women should use contraception so that they don’t spread infections. These include using condoms on sex toys like vibrators, and using dental dams when having oral sex.

Myth	Truth
Gay men can use any condom they can find for anal sex.	There are special condoms for anal sex, which are thicker than usual. This is because infections are more easily spread having anal sex, so if a condom breaks you run a high risk of catching something. You can get free condoms from lots of gay venues around Ireland. They are also available alongside regular condoms in pharmacies and supermarkets, though they can be harder to find.
HIV/AIDS is a gay disease	Millions of people across the world have HIV and AIDS, and not just gay men catch it. See the above section on sex and health for more information.
Lesbians don't need to get screened for cervical cancer, since they don't have sex with men	While the highest at-risk group for cervical cancer is women who have sex with men, all women over the age of 25, whether you are sexually active with men, with women or not at all, should go for a cervical smear test. This is free for women now and you can register for the National Smear Test service by going online to www.cervicalcheck.ie and registering. You'll need your PPS number (see the 'Employment' section for details on how to get a PPS number).

If you think you might have an STI, or if you had unprotected sex with someone and are worried, go straight to your doctor or one of the free sexual health clinics. The faster you can get treatment for an STI the less damage it will cause to you and others.

Mind, Body and Soul

Regular sexual health check-ups are important to help ensure you can continue to have and enjoy a healthy sex life. Visit your local health centre.

A sexual health check-up includes:

- For men: STI screening, testicular checks, prostate screening.
- For women: STI screening, smear tests, being breast aware.
- Remember: It is good sexual health practice to get an STI check regularly. STIs don't always go away by themselves, so get checked out! Once diagnosed, most STIs can be cured with medication.

Dental health

Something that can easily get overlooked when thinking about health is your dental health. If you don't look after your teeth, you can have infections in your gums, rotting teeth and other problems. The easiest way to avoid these kinds of problems is to brush your teeth twice a day with a good toothbrush and toothpaste. Dental floss can be used to remove stubborn bits of food, and mouthwash can help protect against bad breath and infections.

You should also go and get checked out by a dentist twice a year. If you have a medical card you are entitled to these check-ups free of charge with a registered dentist. Check with your local health centre for more details.

If you have any kind of toothache, go and see your dentist right away — a small cleaning or filling is better than having to have that tooth pulled!





Smoking

Smoking is very bad for your health. The negative health impacts of smoking include coughs, increased likelihood of heart attacks, increased likelihood of stroke and lung problems such as bronchitis and emphysema, and it is the main preventable cause of cancer. It can cause infertility and cause men to be unable to get erections and have sex. Overall, people who smoke live about 10–15 years less than non-smokers.

If you're a smoker and you want to quit, there are lots of places and people who can help. See the chapter on 'Staying Safe' for more information about quitting, and see the 'Contacts' section for numbers and websites of people who can help.

SOUL

Your soul needs to be looked after and guarded just as closely as your mind and body. To some people 'soul' is about spirituality and faith, to others it's about nurturing their emotional needs. Whatever images and feelings the word conjures up for you, the outcome is the same. It is an integral part of balancing a healthy lifestyle and feeling good about yourself.

Making the transition between living in your placement surrounded by familiar faces and rules to being out on your own can be daunting and it's natural to worry about feeling lonely. It is a part of growing up and there are lots of ways to cheer yourself up and

Mind, Body and Soul

look positively towards the future. Finding out more about yourself — your likes and dislikes, views and opinions - can help you to be more confident and happy in your own skin.

Spirituality

Spirituality comes in all shapes and sizes, and it's not always about having a 'religion'. Some people have a very strong faith in religion, such as being Catholic or Protestant (which are Christian religions) or being Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist, or any number of other religions. Often, people who believe in God or a higher power simply see themselves as spiritual. And some spiritual people don't believe in any God. You should take some time to think about what you believe in and see if there's a group or church that fits what you believe. If you feel strongly about some of the 'big' questions in life, such as 'Who am I?' and 'Why are we here?', then you should take time to explore them. Some people find that belonging to a church or spiritual group can really help if they feel a bit lost and unsure — which can easily happen when you're moving from childhood to adulthood.

Who am I?

Our relationships, traits and interests and many other elements help to shape the person we are and where we belong.

What is your 'Identity'?

If you have an identity card of some sort, let's say a passport or driving licence, it gives some basic information about you. It tells us your nationality, your age and your name. But your 'identity', who you are, must be more than those few basic details.



Mind, Body and Soul

Identity, who we think we are and who other people think we are, is very important. Many people travel through life struggling with ideas about who they are and who others think they are. Problems can start when we think we have to be what others want or expect us to be: the schoolboy who wants to be a mechanic but his parents want him to be an accountant, the Traveller girl who wants to be a newsreader but her family and the TV company think otherwise, the gay man who wants to live a free life but his community and family want him to be straight. All of these examples happen around us every day. In fact there has probably been an example in your own life where you had your true identity hidden because of what others might think.

It is not always easy to be true to who we really are inside. It can seem easier to just be as others want or expect us to be. This can make us feel wanted and even loved. But in the long run, over time, your true identity will grow inside. Many people try to fight their identity, maybe they start drinking and taking drugs heavily to silence it. Indeed, when you are with others who are also hiding their true identity you can be put under even more pressure to keep hiding from who you really are or could be.



Mind, Body and Soul

Throughout history there are many, many examples of people who set their true identity free. People who worked hard to become the person they wanted to be and not the person everyone expected them to be. Some may surprise you. Below is a quick quiz — see if you can guess which famous people had the following backgrounds:

1) He was born in a caravan in a dumping ground in central London. At the age of one he was abandoned and put into a workhouse. He escaped from the workhouse and often lived on the streets earning money entertaining passers-by with jokes and sketches. He went on to become one of Hollywood's greatest legends.

Clint Eastwood

☐

Charlie Chaplin

☐

Arnold Schwarzenegger

☐

2) Three of these famous people had or have dyslexia. Can you guess which ones?

Orlando Bloom

☐

Sylvester Stallone

☐

David Beckham

☐

Albert Einstein

☐

Mariah Carey

☐

Tom Cruise

☐

3) Which of these comedy actors lives with Asperger's Syndrome (a form of autism)?

- a) Eddie Murphy ☐
- b) Dan Aykroyd ☐
- c) Robin Williams ☐

4) Which of these celebrities grew up in residential care?

- a) Goldie (DJ, musician) ☐
- b) Marilyn Monroe (actress) ☐
- c) Kriss Akabusi (athlete) ☐
- d) Seal (singer) ☐
- e) Samantha Morton (actress) ☐
- f) Neil Morrissey (actor) ☐

For the answers, see the Notes section at the back of the guide.

GETTING INVOLVED IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Joining your local sports club, drama group, church group, etc. are great ways to meet new people in your area while doing something you enjoy and have in common. Your local library is a great source for information, as well as the internet, local papers and club notice boards. Young mums — why not join a mother and baby group? Meet other parents with children of the same age to share advice, support and friendship.



It can be scary trying to find out who you are, and who you want to be. But trying out some of the tips and hints in the next section might just help. You can also try talking to other people you trust about what's on your mind. Everyone has gone or is going through the same thing — it's all part of being human!

Get Involved

What are your interests?

How can you translate these interests into a social activity?

Like to run? Join an athletics club.

What steps can you take to pursue these interests?

Sexuality

Your sexuality is part of who you are — humans are naturally sexual beings. That doesn't mean it's all about sex — the way you act around certain people, the way you dress and the way you view yourself is all tied in to your sexuality. Most people in Ireland are heterosexual — attracted to the opposite gender. Some people are homosexual — attracted to their own gender. Some people are attracted to both men and women. Pretty much all people want to find someone they love and who loves them.

So What if You're Gay?



Mind, Body and Soul

Being LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered) is no different to being straight (attracted to the opposite gender) in lots of ways. You have the same emotions and hopes and dreams as anyone else when it comes to relationships — meeting someone, falling in love and maybe having a family.

But some things are different if you're gay. A lot of people don't understand what it means to be gay, it can be difficult to meet people your own age, and being gay brings a different set of things to know about sexual health and general safety.

Meeting People

Meeting other LGBT people your own age, either for a relationship or friendship, can be hard. A lot of people might not be comfortable telling strangers that they are gay. There are a few places you can go to meet up with other gay people — see the 'Contacts' section for more details. If you are in college, most universities and ITs have LGBT societies, which can be a great way to meet other gay students. You can also go online to meet people, but you should always be aware of safety issues when meeting up with people you've never met before — see the section in this guide about 'Staying Safe' for more details.

169

Safety

Ireland is generally a pretty safe place if you're gay — however, some people will still see you as more of a target if you are gay, or they think you are. The Gardaí have a special unit with officers who are trained in the special issues that gay people can face. Every station has an LGBT liaison officer, and you can ask to speak to them if you want to. There are lots of laws now to make sure you aren't discriminated against in all areas of your life, like in work or when travelling. If you think you are being discriminated against, you can do something about it. For example, you can ask to speak to someone in your company who deals with bullying or harassment. Homophobic bullying or harassment is not acceptable in Ireland, and it's your right to live your life free from it. You can see the section about your rights to read more about this.

Coming Out

‘Coming out’ is the process of telling people that you’re gay. It should only happen when you are comfortable enough with being gay to tell people yourself. Some people will not know what to say to you when you tell them — you should be prepared for confusion, silence and eventually lots of questions! There are lots of places and groups that can help you to get ready to come out to family and friends, and that will support you through the process. A list of these is at the back of this book. And

if you’re not gay, but someone comes out to you, treat them with respect, and realise that it took a lot of guts for them to talk to you.



Being Transgendered

Being transgendered means that your body doesn’t really match what’s in your mind and your soul. You may be a woman but have to live in a male body. That can be very upsetting, but there are lots of places you can go and people you can see for support. Transgender issues are usually spoken about at the same time as lesbian and gay stuff, but being transgendered has its own challenges. If you feel like this and you want to talk to someone about it, you can talk to [BelongTo](#), which has groups for transgendered youth. All the contact details for these groups and more are in the ‘Contacts’ section.

Relationships

Healthy, supportive relationships help to nourish our souls and increase our happiness levels.

Relationships end and new ones begin and, although it can feel that way at the time, it's not the end of the world. All of our relationships — family, friendships, boyfriends, girlfriends — should make us feel happy, confident, secure and content.

Staying connected to friends, family and all of the people who support you — who care, who will call, and who will help when help is needed — is vitally important to helping you feel safe and happy in your new surroundings.

Think about the relationships you have in your life right now. These will go from maybe very intimate and personal relationships (boyfriend/girlfriend, best friend, family) to casual friendships (people you know from school or work) to fleeting relationships



171



(chatting to someone you don't know in a coffee shop). There are lots of different types of relationships, and all of them are important for you to be happy and safe.

Hopefully most relationships in your life will be mutual — you like the other person, and they like you. You can share your thoughts with them and talk to them about little things and big things. They want to spend time with you as much as you want to spend time with them. They want good things to happen for you, and are happy when you do well. A good relationship will help you to feel safe to try new things, to feel like you matter to someone and to encourage you to make the best of yourself and your life.



However, sometimes we can all get into relationships with people who aren't like that — with people who don't want to spend time with you unless you are 'doing' something for them, or who don't truly have your best interests at heart. And sometimes people you thought were your friends can change. They might start acting differently, doing dangerous things and trying to get you involved. It can be hard to break a relationship like that, but you have to remember that you are responsible for your actions — and you deserve good relationships with people who really care about you as a person. You can get help with these kinds of issues by contacting your local Counselling Service — don't hesitate to talk to someone if a relationship is getting you down. If your relationships are causing you harm, or scaring you, then you should get help. See the 'Staying Safe' section of this guide, and the 'Contacts' section in the back of the guide to help you.

173

You also need to be aware of how you treat other people in your life. Do you respect them, like them as people and help them out if they need it? If you don't treat people with respect, they won't respect you, and you can make life difficult for yourself, as well as others.

Sometimes the best advice is the oldest advice: treat people the way you would like to be treated — with respect and honesty. This goes from your boyfriend to your best friend, from your girlfriend to the bus driver, and back again.

The important thing to remember when you're thinking about your mind, your body and your soul is that you need to be happy and healthy to get the best out of life. There are so many places and people who are there to help if you're struggling with either your physical, mental or emotional health. You owe it to yourself to get help if you need it.

THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



1 Who is important in your life?

2 What do you enjoy doing?

3 If under stress what can you do?

4 Who can you call if you need someone to talk to?

1)

2)

3)

Body (True/False)

1) Exercise makes you feel better. True ☐ False ☐

2) To see change physically you only need to exercise once a week. True ☐ False ☐

3) Fats, oils and sweets are good for you. True ☐ False ☐

4) You can eat as much vegetables as you like as part of a healthy diet. True ☐ False ☐

5) You can register with your own GP at 16. True ☐ False ☐

Mind, Body and Soul

- 6) Sexual health is very important.

TrueFalse
- 7) There are many different types of contraceptives available.

TrueFalse
- 8) There are no such things as free STI clinics.

TrueFalse

LGBT / Relationships

1) What does being Gay mean?

175

2) What does being bisexual mean?

- 3) When a gay man has anal sex there are different types of condoms he can use.

TrueFalse
- 4) Is HIV/AIDS a primarily gay disease?

TrueFalse
- 5) Lesbians do not need to be screened for cervical cancer.

TrueFalse

6) Where can you go to get help/support if you are gay?

SIMPLE RECIPES:

Omelette

Ingredients:

2–4 eggs (2 eggs serves 1)

Cooking oil

Salt, pepper

Cheese, ham, tomatoes, mushrooms



Directions

Heat a little cooking oil in a non-stick pan.

Whisk eggs with salt and pepper.

When the oil is hot, pour the egg mixture in and leave for about 5 seconds for the bottom to set a little, then start stirring with a non-stick spatula or a wooden spoon so that it bubbles up and becomes lighter.

Keep cutting the bottom of the omelette with the spatula or spoon to let the egg through to the bottom of the pan.

Turn off the heat when you have what looks like an omelette and when it is still wet on top (don't let it dry out — it will continue cooking for a while yet)

Add tomato, ham, grated cheese, mushrooms — the choice is endless! Don't add too much, or you will not be able to fold it.

Finish under the grill or cover pan for a minute or two, until cheese melts and eggs are cooked to your liking.

Serve with a glass of fruit juice.



Mind, Body and Soul

15-Minute Garlic Chicken

Ingredients:

4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves
4 teaspoons flour
salt and pepper
2 teaspoons oil
1/2 cup chicken stock
1 teaspoon minced garlic
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon butter



Directions

Dust chicken pieces with flour and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Fry in hot oil for 5 minutes on each side.

Add stock, garlic, lemon juice and butter to pan.

Cook for 2 minutes.

Pour over chicken.

Serve with steamed vegetables and potatoes.



USEFUL CONTACTS



Moving Forward

EPIC (Empowering People In Care)

Provides information, support and advice for young people in residential care, foster care or aftercare in Ireland.

Tel: (01) 872 7661 or Text: (087) 903 6598

Website: www.epiconline.ie

General Support and Information

Childline

Childline is a service for young people aged under 18 run by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC). Childline has a freephone number so it won't cost you anything to call. Childline is ready and waiting to receive calls all day and night.

Freefone: (1800) 666666

Website: www.childline.ie or www.ispcc.ie

Other useful websites: www.citizensadvice.ie

My New Home

Accommodation and Housing Support

Threshold

Threshold National Housing Charity advises people about their housing rights. Their website provides lots of general information regarding the rights of tenants and landlords. For more personalised assistance contact your nearest

Threshold advice centre.

Tel: (01) 678 6310

Website: www.threshold.ie

Dublin Advice Centre Tel: (01) 678 6096

Galway Advice Centre Tel: (091) 563080

Cork Advice Centre Tel: (021) 427 8848

Waterford Area LoCall: (1890) 434445

PRTB (Private Residential Tenants Board)

The PRTB resolves disputes between landlords and tenants, operates a national tenancy registration system and provides information and advice on the private rented sector.

Tel: (01) 635 0600

Email: information@prtb.ie

Website: www.prtb.ie

Useful Contacts

Homelessness

Homeless Helpline

Freephone: (1800) 707707

Focus Ireland

Tel: (01) 6712555

Website: www.focusireland.ie



Education and Training

Literacy

NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency)

NALA helps people to improve their literacy using tutors and distance-learning services.

Freephone: (1800) 202065

Website: www.nala.ie

Learn Online @ www.literacytools.ie www.writeon.ie

179

Education

Youthreach is a second chance at education for 15–20-year-olds

Website: www.youthreach.ie

Useful websites:

www.qualifax.ie www.irishschoollinks.com www.irishcolleges.ie

Education Financial Support

The website www.studentfinance.ie offers great information about student grants and funds that can help you to continue with your education.

It explains in plain English how you can apply for financial assistance and takes you through the necessary steps.

Training

FÁS

Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority

Head Office, Tel: (01) 607 0500

Website: www.fas.ie

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

National Office, Tel: (01) 402 0427

Website: www.vtos.ie

Useful Contacts

Employment

Useful job listing websites:
www.monster.ie www.irishjobs.ie
www.jobs.ie
FÁS and job clubs: www.fas.ie



Unemployment

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU)
Website: www.inou.ie

Redundancy

Website: www.redundancy.ie

Volunteering

Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre

The centre provides information on all forms of volunteering opportunities available to anyone who wants to get involved and support development activities.

Tel: (1890) 252676

Opening Times: Monday to Friday, 10am–5pm; Thursday,
10am–8pm; Saturday, 10am–3pm.

Volunteering Ireland: www.volunteeringireland.ie

Volunteer Centres Ireland: www.volunteer.ie Volunteer with VSI

(Voluntary Service International): www.vsi.ie/volunteer

VSO Ireland: www.vso.ie

Money Matters

MABS (the Money Advice and Budgeting Service) Call free, confidential
helpline number: (1890) 283438 (Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm)

Website: www.mabs.ie

Useful website: www.itsyourmoney.ie

Financial Entitlements

Dept. of Social Protection

Website: www.welfare.ie

My Rights

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA):

www.omc.gov.ie

Ombudsman for Children:

www.oco.ie; Email: oco@oco.ie

Useful Contacts

Citizens Information

Provides really great information on everything from public services to entitlements for citizens in Ireland.

Tel: (01) 605 9000

Website: www.citizensinformation.ie



Legal Aid Board

Seek legal advice by contacting your local law centre (details on website).

Tel: (1890) 615200

Website: www.legalaidboard.ie

FLAC

Offers free legal advice services

Tel: (01) 874 5690

Website: www.flac.ie

The website www.spunout.ie has great information about the rights of young people in Ireland and lots more of interest.

181

Staying Safe

Alcohol/Drugs

Alcoholics Anonymous, Tel: (01) 842 0700

Drugs/HIV Helpline: (1800) 459459

Alanon/Alateen

Offer understanding and support for families and friends of problem drinkers in an anonymous environment. Alateen is for teenagers aged 12–17 affected by a problem drinker.

Website: www.al-anon-ireland.org

Useful websites: www.drinkaware.ie www.drugs.ie

Domestic Violence/Abuse Women

Women's Aid

Helpline: (1800) 341900

Website: www.womensaid.ie

Men

Amen

Helpline: (046) 902 3718 (Monday to Friday, 9.00am–5.00pm)

Out of hours, Tel: (086) 794 1880

Website: www.amen.ie

Email: info@amen.ie

Useful Contacts

Rape Crisis Network Ireland

Provides addresses, directions and contact details for rape crisis centres all over Ireland, as well as offering information, support and advice.

Website: www.rcni.ie



CARI (for people affected by sexual abuse)

Tel: (1890) 924567 Website: www.cari.ie

Mind

National Counselling Service. Provides a free and confidential service for people who have experienced abuse in the past and need someone to talk to.

Website: www.hse-ncs.ie/

Phonelines (Freephone):

Call your local number for your HSE area.

Area	Number
Dublin North County/Dublin North Central and Dublin North West	(1800) 234110
South East Dublin/Dun Laoghaire and East Wicklow	(1800) 234111
Dublin South Central/Dublin South West/Kildare and West Wicklow	(1800) 234112
Midlands	(1800) 234113
West	(1800) 234114
Mid West	(1800) 234115
Kerry & Cork	(1800) 234116
North East	(1800) 234117
South East	(1800) 234118
North West	(1800) 234119

Samaritans

Provides confidential emotional support 24-hours a day

Helpline: (1850) 609090

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Website: www.samaritans.ie

Useful Contacts

Aware

Provides support and information for people with depression, bipolar disorder, postnatal depression or suicidal thoughts Helpline: (1890) 303302

Email: wecanhelp@aware.ie

Website: www.aware.ie



Irish Advocacy Network (IAN)

The Irish Advocacy Network provides peer advocacy services throughout Ireland.

Tel: (047) 38918 or (047) 72863

Email: admin@irishadvocacynetwork.com

Website: www.irishadvocacynetwork.com

Shine

Supports people affected by ill mental health.

Website: www.shineonline.ie

Grow

Grow in Ireland helps people who have suffered, or are suffering, from mental health problems.

Website: www.grow.ie

Postnatal Depression Ireland

Website: www.pnd.ie

Useful websites: www.yourmentalhealth.ie

www.letsomeoneknow.ie www.seechange.ie

Body

Health Service Executive (HSE)

Helpline: (1850) 778888

Website: www.hse.ie

National Cancer Helpline: (1800) 200 700

Website: www.cancer.ie

Smokers Quitline: (1850) 201 203

Soul

Relationships

Sexual Health

Get the right information.

Useful websites: www.yoursexualhealth.ie www.b4udecide.ie

Useful Contacts

Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)

GLEN works to achieve full equality and inclusion for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Ireland, and protection from all forms of discrimination.

Website: www.glen.ie



BelongTo

BelongTo is a youth group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people in Ireland.

Website: www.belongto.org

Gay Switchboard

Gay Switchboard provides a listening support and referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans people and anyone who needs to consider issues around sexuality.

Website: www.gayswitchboard.ie

Lesbian Line

All volunteers at Dublin Lesbian Line are lesbian and bisexual women who will listen without judgement and without opinion.

Website: www.dublinlesbianline.ie

QueerID

QueerID is a discussion forum and social networking site for gay men and women in Ireland.

Website: www.queerid.com

Parenthood

Parenting and Family Support

Pregnancy

Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA). The IFPA is Ireland's leading sexual health charity providing sexual health services, counselling and education.

Website: www.ifpa.ie

The website www.positiveoptions.ie has a list of free, confidential, non-judgemental pregnancy counselling services you can call, or freetext 'list' to 50444 for a list of free, non-judgemental, trustworthy counselling agencies.

Useful Contacts

One Family

Provides support for one-parent families.

LoCall Info Line: (1890) 662212

Website: www.onefamily.ie



Treoir

Provides accurate, confidential and free information to parents who are not married to each other and to those involved with them. Get information on: registering the birth of your baby, social welfare entitlements, legal issues such as custody and access, the importance of both parents in the lives of their children, passport applications, fathers' rights, grandparents' rights, and lots more.

Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP)

Helps young parents aged under 20 and generally supports them until their children are 2 years of age. TPSP can offer support and advice to suit your individual situation: pregnancy, health, relationships, accommodation, social welfare entitlements, education and training, child development, parenting, childcare and anything else you are concerned about as a young parent. In some cases financial support may be available. TPSP can also help you to get to know other young parents in your area.

Contact Treoir, LoCall: (1890) 252084

Website: www.treoir.ie

Aim Family Services

Offers a confidential family law information service.

Tel: (01) 670 8363

Website: www.aimfamilyservices.ie

185

Notes

Answers to quiz in Mind, Body, Soul:

Question 1	(b) Charlie Chaplin
Question 2	Orlando Bloom, Albert Einstein, Tom Cruise
Question 3	(b) Dan Aykroyd
Question 4	All of Them

“Every day do something that
will inch you closer to a better
tomorrow. (Doug Firebaugh)”

