

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The Rights of Children and Young People



Irish Council for
Civil Liberties

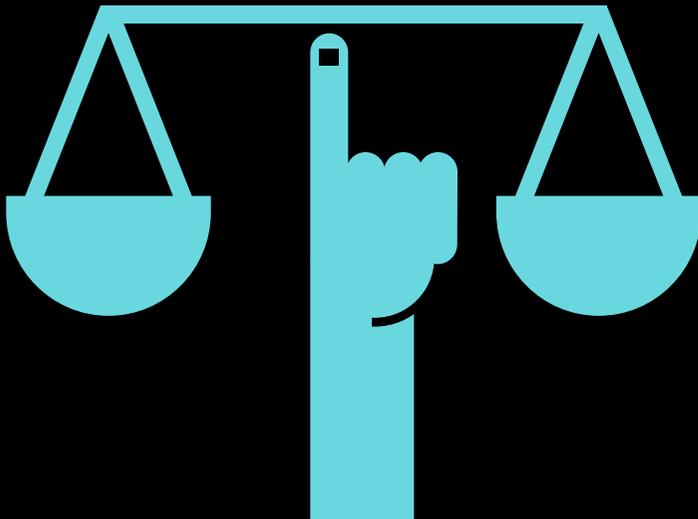
**CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS**

ALLIANCE

Uniting Voices For Children

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide tells you about your rights as a child or a young person.

Your rights are based on national, European and international law and on the Constitution of Ireland.

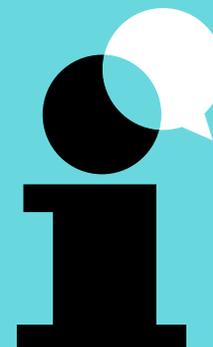
Your parents or guardian look after some of your rights on your behalf. This guide also answers questions they may have about protecting your rights. These sections are clearly marked.

The guide also tells you where you can find more information, help or support. There are many sources of good advice and help for children and young people. Please see page 70 of this guide. If you need more detailed advice about your rights, you may have to talk to a solicitor.

This guide uses some words which you may not know. We have explained these words in the section starting on page 6.

The information in this guide covers legal developments up to November 2014.

Disclaimer: The aim of this guide is to give general information about your rights. We have done our best to make sure the information is accurate and up to date, but you should not take it as legal advice.



INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by rights?

Human rights are the basic freedoms and entitlements that all of us have because we are human beings. These rights should be available to everyone, whatever their gender, race, religion, marital or family status, sexual orientation, age, disability and whether or not they are a member of the Traveller community. Ireland has made commitments under both national and international law to make sure that the rights of everyone living in the State are respected, protected and met.

Who makes sure my rights are respected?

The State must make sure that your rights are respected. This duty comes from sources including:

- the Constitution of Ireland (also known as Bunreacht na hÉireann);
- the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and
- the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

All agents of the Government, including An Garda Síochána, schools and health services must respect your rights.

On a day-to-day basis your parents or guardian are responsible for your care and well-being and they have to act in your best interests when making decisions for you. In some cases, where your parents are having difficulty looking after you, the State must support you and help your parents care of you.

What is a guardian?

A guardian is someone who has the right to make decisions for you. Usually, it is one or both of your parents. This role may also be carried out by another adult, a relative, a foster carer or a social worker.

Am I a 'child' in the eyes of the law?

Legally, you are a 'child' if you are under 18 years and you are not married. This gives you certain protections under the law. It can also mean that you cannot do certain things that adults can do, such as vote or earn the minimum wage.

References to 'young people' in this guide refer to teenagers under 18 years of age.

What rights do I have?

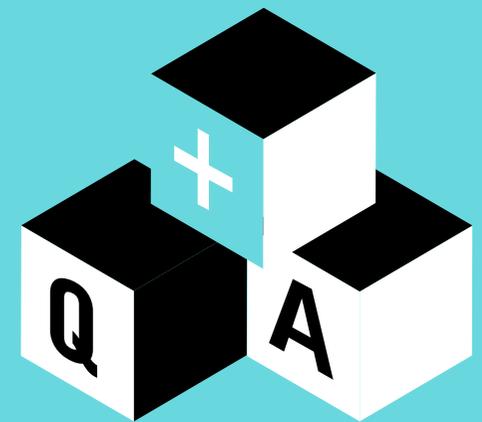
For the most part, children and young people have the same rights as adults, except in certain areas such as voting. You also have specific, additional rights such as the right to be adopted. This is because children and young people have different needs from adults.

Who can exercise my rights on my behalf?

Children and young people often rely on adults to exercise their rights on their behalf. Your parents or guardian have a duty to help you to achieve your rights. For example, they have a duty to give you food, shelter and medical care, and to protect you from harm. This is particularly important for very young children.

Your parents or guardian also have a legal right to make decisions that affect you such as what type of school you will attend or what type of medical treatment you may receive. They may also have to give their consent so that you can do certain things such as get a passport, join a club, go on school trips, and so on.

In some cases, such as child protection and adoption cases, a child has a legal right to have their views heard and considered when important decisions are being made that will affect their life.



KEY WORDS EXPLAINED

Access

A term used to describe having contact with your parents and other family members when you are in care or when your parents do not live together

Adopted Children Register

If you are adopted, your adoption is entered onto the Adopted Children Register. This Register (list) has details of your adoptive family

Asylum seeker

Someone who has left his or her home country to seek protection in another country

Birth certificate

A record of the date and place of your birth, your name and your parents' name(s)

Board of Management

The body that manages a school. It normally includes parents, people who represent the teachers and the owners of the school. The school principal reports to the Board of Management

Care order

This is a court order placing you as a child or young person in the care of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). If you are in care, you will usually live with a foster family or in a children's residential centre

Caution

A warning from the Gardaí which may be issued when a young person has accepted responsibility for an offence. There are formal and informal cautions

Child and Family Agency (Tusla)

The State agency dedicated to improving the lives of children. It is in charge of areas that used to come under the Health Service Executive's Children and Family Services, the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board. It also includes some psychological services and services dealing with domestic, sexual and gender-based violence

Children detention school

A special residential school such as Trinity House, Oberstown Boys School and Oberstown Girls School in Lusk, County Dublin where children or young people are sent by the courts if they are charged with, or found to have committed, a criminal offence

Community-based sanctions

A sanction (punishment) handed down by a court other than a prison sentence. It could be the payment of compensation to a victim or an order to work in the community

Custody

A term used to describe a parent's right to the physical care and control of a child

Deportation order

An order requiring a person who is not an Irish citizen to leave the country because it has been decided that they do not have the right to stay in Ireland

Detention

Detention is a requirement to remain in a particular setting usually for a specific period of time. This may be in school during lunchtime as a means of discipline, or in a detention school as punishment for a crime or in a hospital to allow for treatment for mental health illnesses

Direct provision

This is the Government's system for providing accommodation and food to people while they wait for a decision on their applications for asylum in Ireland

Educational Welfare Officer

Someone who works with schools, teachers and parents to encourage children to attend school

European Union (EU)

The EU is a political, social and economic union of 28 countries. Each Member State remains an independent country but agrees to follow some common laws and policies

Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB)

The Garda agency in charge of policing Ireland's immigration rules. It monitors borders, investigates illegal immigration and human trafficking, and carries out deportations

Guardian

Someone who has legal responsibility for you as a child. It is usually one or both of your parents but this role can also be carried out by another relative, a foster carer or a social worker

Guardian ad Litem (GAL)

Someone appointed by the court in child protection or care cases to make sure that the judge hears your views and to advise the court on what is in your best interest

Health Service Executive (HSE)

The State body responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services through medical professionals, hospitals and community health centres

Immigration

This is the movement of people into Ireland to study, work or to seek asylum

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)

A Department of Justice and Equality body responsible for asylum, immigration, citizenship and visas

Juvenile Liaison Officer

A Garda who deals with young people in the Garda Youth Diversion Programme – a programme of activities to help children behave in a way that helps them stay out of trouble with the law

Migrant

Someone who moves country or region. This may be for work, education, family unity, safety, better opportunities or a better standard of living

Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC)

A State body which decides asylum applications and applications by refugees to allow family members to enter and live in Ireland (family reunification cases)

Probation

This is an option that a court may give to a person found guilty of an offence. If you are on probation you have to promise to behave well and to avoid getting involved in crime during the probation period

Reception and Integration Agency (RIA)

A Department of Justice and Equality body responsible for providing asylum seekers and others seeking protection in the State with a place to live. The RIA houses asylum seekers in special accommodation centres, organises health and education services for them and helps destitute (very poor) EU nationals to return home

Refugee

Someone who has left their home country because of a fear of being persecuted due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion – and has been recognised as a refugee by the Minister for Justice and Equality

Restorative justice

This is a way to rehabilitate offenders through 'reconciling' with victims and the community. Examples of 'restorative justice' would be where you apologise to your victim or do community work

Search warrant

This is an order, usually from the court, which allows the Gardai to search a premises when they are investigating a crime

Separated child

See definition of 'unaccompanied minor' below

Sexual orientation

This refers to the gender to which a person is sexually attracted. It includes being heterosexual (straight), gay, lesbian or bisexual

Social worker

Social workers help and support children and young people considered to be at risk or who are not safe. The Child and Family Agency employs social workers to work with children and families

Solicitor

A type of lawyer who can give you legal advice or help you and your family prepare for a case before the courts

Special care order

A court order placing a young person in a Special Care Unit, usually for a short period of time

Special Care Unit

A secure locked residential (live in) unit where children or young people aged 11 to 17 years are placed by the High Court when they are considered a risk to their own health or safety

Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

Someone employed by a school to help meet the care needs of students with disabilities in the classroom

Subsidiary protection

This is a form of protection by the State granted to people who are at risk of harm if they are sent back to their home country, but who do not fit into the strict criteria required to obtain refugee status

Supported lodgings

A scheme for young people aged 15 and over which provides them with accommodation in a family environment. This scheme supports young people before they have to live on their own

Tusla

Tusla is the name of the Government's Child and Family Agency. It provides a range of supports to children and their families. See definition of 'Child and Family Agency' above

Unaccompanied minor

If you are under 18 and arrive in Ireland on your own, or if the adult who comes with you leaves you once you enter the country, you will be known as an 'unaccompanied minor'. See 'separated child'

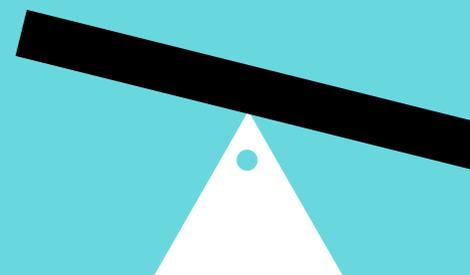
United Nations (UN)

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation which aims to maintain peace and security between countries

1. MY RIGHT TO BE TREATED EQUALLY, TO BE INCLUDED AND TO MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS

As a child or young person, you have a right to equal treatment. Depending on your age and some legal restrictions, you also have the right to take part in the life of your community, in employment, and to make independent choices about matters that concern you.

In this section we explain some of these rights. We also give a table showing some of the things you can do at different ages.



1.1 Equality What is equality?

Equality is about recognising that everyone has the same worth and should be treated with dignity. Sometimes people are treated badly or unfairly because of negative attitudes and stereotypes like racism. This type of treatment goes against the idea of equality and is known as discrimination. You have the right to be protected from discrimination at school, when you buy or sell something, when you use a service such as the bus, attend a youth or sports group, or when you are in employment.

Discrimination usually happens when you are treated differently or less favourably than someone else in the same situation and the reason why that happened is related to:

- your gender: whether you identify yourself as a boy, a girl, or as transgender;
- your marital or civil status: whether you are married or in a civil partnership;
- your family status: whether you are pregnant, a parent of a child or the carer of someone with a disability;
- your sexual orientation: whether you are heterosexual (straight), gay, lesbian or bisexual;
- your religion, or lack of religious beliefs;
- your age (this generally only applies to those over 18 years);
- your disability;
- your race, ethnic background, nationality and colour;
- your membership of the Traveller community.

These personal characteristics are known as 'discrimination grounds'. You also have a right to be protected from harassment on these grounds. Harassment includes things like offensive comments and text messages or even physical things like pushing or hitting people.

What can I do if I feel I have been discriminated against?

You can contact the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) for information and guidance (see page 71 for contact details). You should also look for support from your parent or guardian or from the support organisations listed at the end of this guide.

The IHREC may be able to help you to make a case to the Equality Tribunal. The Tribunal will issue a legally binding decision which will try to fix your situation. In some cases, you may get compensation. You also may be able to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

What should I do if I feel that I have been the victim of a hate crime?

You have a right to be protected against threatening, abusive and insulting words and behaviour either to your face or in publications, displays and materials. If you think you have been a victim of this type of treatment, you can contact the Gardaí and report it as a crime.

It is an offence for anyone to physically threaten you, harass you, assault you or cause you serious harm for any reason. It is also an offence for someone to damage or threaten to damage your property. Again, you can report this to the Gardaí.

1.2 Community participation At what age can I vote?

You have the right to vote from the age of 18. If you are an Irish citizen, you can vote in all elections and referenda. If you live in Ireland, but are not an Irish citizen, you have the right to vote in some elections. To vote, you must make sure that your name is on the Electoral Register. You can get an application form to have your name placed on the Electoral Register (list of people who can vote) from all local authorities, post offices and public libraries or on www.checktheregister.ie. You must return your completed form to your local authority.

I'm under 18 – can I get involved in decision-making?

You can get involved in decision-making in your community. For example, Comhairle na nÓg are local youth councils that meet in every county. They give children and young people a chance to be involved in decision-making in matters that affect them. To find out how to get involved, see www.comhairlenanog.ie.

Every two years, each Comhairle na nÓg sends representatives to Dáil na nÓg, the national parliament for children aged 12 to 18 years. This is a great opportunity to bring your concerns to politicians and other decision-makers.

You can also join local child and youth organisations to get involved in activities and make a difference in your local community. See the list at the end of this guide.



Am I allowed to hang around in my neighbourhood?

You have a right to hang out in your community but – just like adults – you are expected to act within the law. Neighbours have the right to complain if they find your behaviour disruptive. If the Gardaí are called, they can ask you to move away. You have the right to be treated with respect and if you are treated badly by the Gardaí, you can make a complaint to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission. See page 70 for more information.

Do I have a right to enter leisure facilities, shops and shopping centres?

You have an equal right to adults to enter shops, shopping centres, leisure facilities or any other public place. The owner or manager has the right to refuse to let you enter if they are concerned about your behaviour. However, they cannot refuse to let you in on the grounds of discrimination (these grounds are listed on page 9).

1.3 Making choices: substances Do I have a right to buy alcohol?

No. It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy or to possess alcohol.

Do I have a right to buy cigarettes?

No. It is illegal for a shop to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18, even if they are for someone else.

Do I have a right to take illegal drugs?

No. Neither adults nor children may take illegal drugs. See www.drugs.ie for information and support.

As well as it being against the law, drinking alcohol, smoking or taking illegal drugs can harm your health and place you in unsafe situations.

1.4 Making choices: sex What is the legal age at which I can consent to have sex?

Legally, you can consent to sex at 17. This is the same irrespective of your sexual orientation – whether you are heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. For more information on sexual health, turn to the chapter 'My Right to Health' on page 35.

1.5 Work At what age can I work?

You can work part-time from the age of 14. You can work full-time from the age of 16. However, while you are under 18, there are limits to the amount of time you can work and the type of work you can do.

The rules are different if you work in your family's business or if you work at sea. For more information about working under the age of 18, contact Citizens Information or the Workplace Relations Customer Services (see page 72 for details).

How many hours a week can I work?

At age 14 you can work outside the school term but not during it. You can work 35 hours a week during Christmas, Easter and summer school holidays and up to 40 hours a week if you are on approved work experience.

At 15 you can work 8 hours a week during the school term. You can work 35 hours a week during Christmas, Easter and summer school holidays and up to 40 hours a week if you are on approved work experience.

If you are 16 or 17, you can work up to 40 hours a week but you cannot work more than 8 hours each day.

Can I work in the evenings or at night?

If you are 14 or 15, you can only work between 8am and 8pm. You have the right to 14 hours off between shifts and two days off each week. Your two days off should be together where possible.

If you are 16 or 17, you can only work between 6am and 10pm. If you work in a pub or other licensed premises, you can work until 11pm if the next day is not a school day. You have the right to 12 hours off between shifts and two days off each week. Your two days off should be together where possible.

How much will I be paid if I work?

Under the age of 18 years, you are entitled to at least €6.06 an hour, but your employer can choose to pay you more.

Depending on the practice in your workplace, you may be allowed to keep tips or they may be shared among all staff. There is no law to say that you have the right to keep them or that you have to give them to your employer.

Will I have to pay tax?

Yes. Everyone has to pay tax. The amount you pay will depend on the amount you earn.

Does my employer have any responsibilities to me as a young person in work?

Yes. Your employer must act within the terms set out by the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996. Your employer must give you a summary of your rights under this law as well as details of your terms of employment within one month of you starting the job. You are also entitled to a payslip.

Your employer must see a copy of your birth certificate or other proof of age before he or she employs you. If you are under 16, your employer must get your parent or guardian's permission in writing.

Can I claim unemployment payments?

No. You can start paying social insurance from the age of 16, but you cannot claim unemployment payments until you are 18 years of age.

Can I complain if I feel that my employer is not treating me fairly (within the law)?

Yes, you can complain confidentially to the Workplace Relations Customer Services. For more information and services available, please see the Workplace Relations website, www.workplacerelations.ie.



1.6 Taking part in the online community

At what age can I join a social networking site?

This depends on the networking site. Different networking sites have different minimum ages. For example, you need to be 13 to join Facebook.

What information should I post online?

Always be on your guard when communicating with anyone online. Any information you post on social media sites can remain in cyberspace forever. Be very careful about what private information you reveal (for instance, your age, real name or address). Do not add people as friends on social media sites unless you know them and never agree to meet face to face with anyone you have met online. Always tell an adult you trust if someone you met online is asking to meet with you.

How can I protect my identity and private information when online?

This depends on the internet site you are using and how you use it. If you are surfing the internet or using an online forum, your identity should stay anonymous. However, social media sites like Facebook that you sign up to or have to register for, are run on the basis that your identity is public.

To protect your identity, never use your full name when making up usernames for websites. Use the privacy settings on social media sites to restrict who can see your identity and the personal information that you put online. Also, be careful about what information you put online. It is almost impossible to remove information or photographs once they have been placed anywhere on the internet, even once.

If I am being bullied online, what should I do and who can I complain to?

The internet is a social space where people communicate, so bullying can take place on online forums and social media sites. It can also take place on mobile phones and because technology is everywhere, it can affect you anywhere, at any time, day or night.

If you feel that you are being bullied, there are a number of things you can do.

- It is important to **tell an adult** you feel you can trust such as a parent, teacher or guidance counsellor if you are being bullied. If there is nobody around, you can call Childline on 1800 66 66 66 to talk to someone supportive or Teenline on 1800 833 634. If the bullying is focusing on you being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can contact a support organisation such as BeLonG To (see www.belongto.org).

- **Don't reply** to bullying texts, emails or abusive postings on social media websites. Replying can often make the situation worse.
- If possible, **keep a record** of the upsetting or hurtful messages (you don't have to read them). If they are text messages, save them. If they are online postings or messages, take a screen shot or email them on to an adult you trust.
- If the bullying is taking place over a mobile phone, **tell your mobile operator**, get a new sim card for your phone and keep your details private.
- If someone bullies you online, you can **use the privacy settings** to make sure the bully cannot see your information or write comments to you. On Facebook, you can use the privacy settings to add friends to a restricted list so that you can control the information they see. Facebook does not notify your friends when you move them to this list. Facebook also allows you to completely block other users so that they cannot see your information or interact with you at all.
- If someone leaves a hurtful comment, you can either **remove** it yourself or contact the site administrators and ask them to take it down immediately.
- Ask.fm is a popular site which allows both named and anonymous users to post content. Ask.fm lets you **turn off anonymous questions** in your privacy options if you don't wish to receive anonymous questions. This will help you to control some of the content you receive in your inbox. You can also report abuse by using the report button. If abuse has been reported, Ask.fm can supply identifying information to the police if necessary. See <http://ask.fm/about/safety> for more information.
- If the bullying is persistent or someone makes racist or inappropriate sexual comments to you online, you can **report** this to the Gardaí or to www.hotline.ie.
- If someone you know tells you that they are being bullied online, it is important to **tell an adult or someone you trust** so that the bullying can be dealt with.

Where can I get more information about using the internet safely and responsibly?

The Irish Internet Hotline has advice and information for parents, guardians and young people about internet use (www.hotline.ie). In addition, Webwise (www.webwise.ie), the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre, has tools and tips to help you use the internet safely. You will find more details of these at the end of this guide.

1.7 At what age can I do various things?

Summary	Activity	Minimum Age
Be recognised as a child	Be recognised and protected by law as a child	Under 18 (unless you are or have been married)
Get involved	Join Comhairle na nÓg or Dáil na nÓg	12
	Join a social networking site	13 for Facebook. Different networks have different minimum ages
	Vote	18
	Stand for local election	18
	Sit on a jury	18
Be independent	Change my name	Under 14, parents may do it on your behalf 14-18 with parental consent
	Leave home	16 with parental consent 18 without parental consent
	Have my own passport	No minimum age but parental consent needed until 18
	Sign a lease to rent accommodation	18
	Leave state care	18
	Get married	18 – in rare cases, you may be able to get a Court Exemption Order to allow you to get married if one or both of you are under 18
	Make a will	18 (unless you are or have been married)
Finish school	Join Youthreach	15
	Leave school	16 or until you have completed three years of secondary school
	Get an apprenticeship	16, if your parent or guardian agrees
Work	Get a part-time job	14 (you may only work during school holidays and for a limited number of hours each week)
	Get a full-time job	16

Make health decisions	Receive private medical advice from a doctor	16, but the doctor may tell your parent or guardian until you are 18
	Get medical treatment (other than mental health treatment) without your parents' or guardians' permission	16
	Get mental health treatment without your parents' or guardians' permission	18
	Refuse medical treatment without your parents' permission	18
	Give blood	18
Be sexually active	Consent to sex	17
Drive	Drive a motorcycle, moped or tractor	16
	Drive a car	17
Join the Army/Gardaí	Join the Reserve Defence Forces	17
	Join An Garda Síochána or the Permanent Defence Forces	18
Be responsible for a crime	Be arrested on suspicion of committing a crime and brought to court	12 (or 10 for serious crimes)
	Be sent to a Children's Detention School	10 to 17
	Be sent to prison	18 and over
Buy certain things	Own a dog	16
	Buy a lottery ticket or place a bet	18
	Buy cigarettes	18
	Buy alcohol	18
	Have a standard current bank account	18
	Be in a pub	Under 15 – only in the company of a parent or guardian and between 10.30am (12.30pm on a Sunday) and 9.00pm
		15 to 18 – between 10.30am (12.30pm on Sundays) and 9.00pm
Access my records	Access education and health records	18 (while under 18, your parents may access your records on your behalf)

2. MY RIGHT TO EDUCATION

For some things, there is no minimum age limit set out in law. These include:

- signing a petition,
- taking a taxi by yourself,
- getting a tattoo or body piercing,
- staying home alone, and
- babysitting.

Can my parents leave me at home alone?

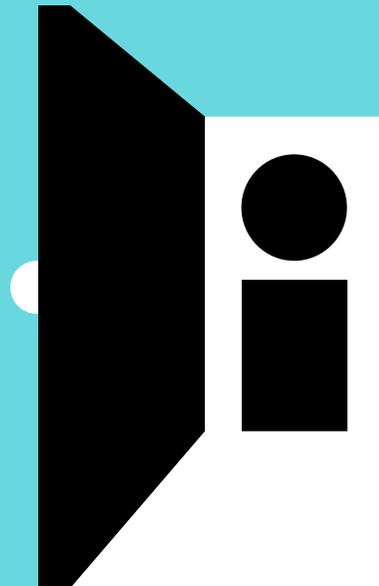
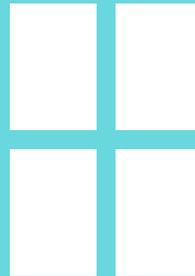
The law does not state at what age your parents can leave you at home alone. It is up to your parents or guardian to decide. The amount of supervision you may need depends on:

- your age, maturity and ability to look after yourself;
- whether or not there are other adults nearby; and
- how often and for how long you are left alone.

Other laws or best practice guidelines apply in the case of young children and vulnerable young people. For example, a parent could be prosecuted for child neglect if they leave a young child at home alone or put a child into a situation which places their health or safety at risk.

Can I babysit at any age?

That's up to your parents or guardian to decide. You must be mature enough to meet the needs of small children and to respond in the right way if there is an unexpected incident at the house, a fire or a stranger calls to the door. In the UK, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) recommends that babysitters should be at least 16 years of age.



2.1 General

Do I have a right to education?

Yes. All children and young people in Ireland have the right to education. This right is protected under the Irish Constitution. In addition, the Education Act 1998 requires the Government to make sure that everyone living in the State is guaranteed “a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person”. The Government must make sure that you receive a certain standard of education. This right is generally defined as covering primary and second-level education.

2.2 Early childhood care and education

For parents and guardians When is my child eligible for free early childhood education?

Young children are entitled to one year of free pre-school care and education. This is called the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Children are eligible for this if they are aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months on 1 September of the relevant year. The ECCE scheme is available to all children for three hours a day during term times in the year before a child starts primary school. The Government pays for this scheme.

Where can I go if I have a complaint about the childcare services that my child receives?

If you have a general complaint, you should first complain to the service provider or child-minder. If you are unhappy with their response, you may contact your local county childcare committee at www.dcyg.gov.ie. You can also contact Tusla's Early Years Pre-School Inspection Services at www.tusla.ie.

Is childcare regulated?

All organisations providing crèche and pre-school services must be registered with and inspected by Tusla's Early Years Pre-School Inspection Services and must follow rules about hygiene, health and safety, and staffing. This applies to both public and private providers. Registered childminders who mind four or more pre-school children privately in their own home must also be registered and inspected.

Where can I go if I am concerned about the safety of a child?

If you have any concern about the safety of a child, contact the Child and Family Agency or the Gardaí.

See section 4 of this guide for more details.

2.3 School attendance

Do I have to go to school?

Yes. You must go to school from the age of 6 until you are 16 years old, or you have finished three years of secondary school. The only exception is if you are being educated at home.

Do I have a right to be taught at home?

Your parent or guardian can choose to educate you at home. To do this, they must register you with the Child and Family Agency's Educational Welfare Services which will work with them to make sure that your education meets the required standard.

Do I have to go school every day?

Yes. Your parent or guardian must make sure that you go to school every day and must tell the school and give a reason if you are going to be absent.



What happens if I am sick or have other reasons for not going to school?

If you are unable to attend school, your parent or guardian should contact the school, preferably in writing, to explain why. If you miss 20 or more days in a school year or if your school is concerned that you are missing too many days, the school must tell the Child and Family Agency's Educational Welfare Services. If there is no clear reason for your absence, the agency may send someone to visit your parent or guardian to work out how to improve your school attendance.

2.4 Choosing a school and school admission

Who decides which school I attend?

Your parent or guardian will usually decide which school you will attend. You do not have an absolute right to attend the school of your choice, but the State must provide you with a school near your home that meets your parents' or guardian's religious or philosophical beliefs. Schools do not have to admit a child if there are no places available. You do not have the right to choose which school you attend.

What rules must the school follow in its admissions policy?

Each school must have an admissions policy which is available to the public. In general, schools cannot refuse to admit you based on any of the following equality grounds:

- gender
- marital or civil status
- family status
- sexual orientation
- religion
- disability
- race
- membership of the Traveller community.

There are some exceptions. For example, girls' schools are entitled to admit only girls. The same applies to boys schools. Also, religious or faith-based schools can give preference to pupils of that religion or faith.



For parents and guardians

Do I have a right to complain if my child is refused admission to a school?

Yes. If a school refuses to enrol your child, you may appeal the decision to the school's Board of Management. If this is unsuccessful, you can appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. You can also ask for help from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to make a complaint to the Equality Tribunal or the Ombudsman for Children. You will find contact details at the end of this guide.

2.5 School curriculum and exams

Who decides what I learn at school?

The Minister for Education and Skills sets the curriculum (the subjects to be taught) taking into account the advice of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Your school and teachers decide what you will learn from that curriculum every day at school.

Do I have a right to choose my own subjects at school?

For your first eight years in school (from junior infants to sixth class), you will study the set curriculum (seven study areas, some of which are further divided into subjects).

The curriculum aims to:

- develop each child's potential to the full,
- encourage a love of learning, and
- help children develop skills they will use throughout their lives.

In secondary school you will be able to choose certain subjects within the curriculum. However, you must study English, Mathematics and Irish.

For more information see www.curriculumonline.ie

Do I have the right not to study religion in school?

Yes, but only if your parent or guardian agrees. If you do not share the religion of your school, or do not have a religion, you do not have to attend religious instruction. Your parent or guardian can ask for you not to participate in this class and the school should agree to this. If you belong to a different religion from that of your school, the school does not have to provide you with instruction in that religion.

Do I have to do homework?

Each school sets its own rules and policies for homework and as a pupil you are responsible for following the rules and policies of your school.

Do I have to do tests and exams?

You must follow school rules or policy which may include sitting tests and exams. Pupils in primary schools will do standardised tests in reading and maths in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes. The law does not say that you must sit the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate exams. However, the Leaving Certificate is the most common way into third-level education (universities and third-level colleges).

There are also other education options such as the Leaving Certificate Applied, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Awards (some of these awards used to be called Further Education and Training Awards) and other courses and access programmes.

Children who are educated at home do not have to sit formal examinations but they can arrange to do so. You can get more information on the website of the State Examinations Commission, www.examinations.ie.

Can I appeal the results of my Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate exams if I think they are unfair?

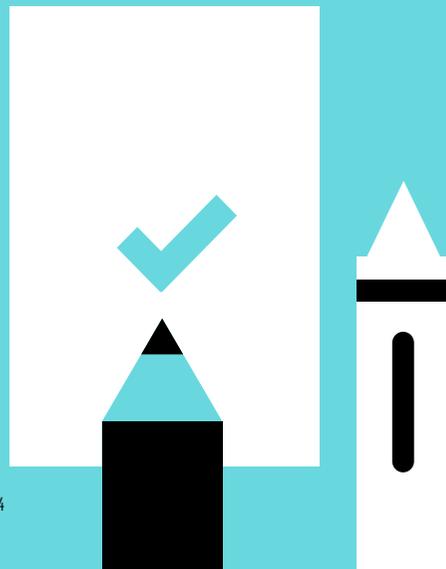
Yes. To appeal a result in a Junior Certificate subject, talk to your school which will apply to the State Examinations Commission on your behalf. To appeal a result in a Leaving Certificate subject, you must fill in an appeal application form which you can get from your school. You must then send the form to the State Examinations Commission. For both exams there is a fee for each subject you wish to appeal.

2.6 Student councils

Student councils let second-level students work with school management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students.

Can I set up a student council in my school?

Yes. Students in post-primary schools have the right to set up a student council and to get help from the school to do this. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has a resource pack on student councils which you might find useful – see www.dcyia.ie.



2.7 School discipline

What happens if I get into trouble at school?

Schools must have a system to deal with students who cause trouble or break the rules. By law, the Board of Management of every school must have a code of behaviour for students. The code of behaviour explains what will happen if you do not obey the school's rules.

Your school will give a copy of the code of behaviour to your parents or guardian when you enrol. The school may ask your parents or guardian to confirm in writing that they agree with the procedures in the code and that they will do all they can to make sure you obey the rules.

If you cause trouble in school, the school may consider a number of options such as:

- detention (being required to stay in school during lunchtime or after school for an hour or so),
- confiscation (taking away something, such as your mobile phone), or
- temporarily excluding you from class (putting you outside the classroom).

If your behaviour is more serious, the school can suspend you or even expel you (explained on the next page). However, the school must act fairly and give you a chance to have your say.

What happens if I am suspended?

Suspension means you are not allowed to attend school for a set number of days. A school may suspend you if you have seriously misbehaved. The school's decision must be reasonable and reflect the seriousness of what you have done. Schools must have procedures in place which outline what steps must be taken before you can be suspended.

What happens if I am expelled?

Expulsion means you cannot attend this school again. By law, schools must have procedures in place which outline the steps to be taken before you can be expelled. For instance, the school's Board of Management must tell the Educational Welfare Officer that the school plans to expel you.

The school must then wait at least 20 days before it can expel you. The Educational Welfare Officer will try to find a way to make sure that you still get an education, perhaps in another school.



Can I appeal my suspension or expulsion?

You cannot appeal it yourself but your parents or guardian can appeal it for you. They must first appeal to the school's Board of Management. If this is not successful, they can appeal to the Department of Education and Skills. An appeals committee will hear the appeal and make recommendations to the Secretary General of the Department on what action to take. The Secretary General will then write to your parents or guardian and to the school's Board of Management with the reasons for the decision. The Secretary General may also tell the Board of Management how to resolve the issue.

Can a teacher or anyone else hit me at school?

No-one is allowed to hit you or be physically abusive to you in any way. If you have been physically abused at school by a teacher or anyone else, you should tell your parents or guardian, or an adult you trust. You, or your parent or guardian acting on your behalf, can make a complaint to the Gardaí. Your parents or guardian may also complain to the school on your behalf.

Can I complain if I think my teacher is treating me unfairly?

Your parent or guardian can make a complaint on your behalf directly to the teacher. If you are not happy with the teacher's response, your parents or guardian can complain to the school principal. If the issue is not resolved, your parent or guardian can make a complaint to the school's Board of Management. Finally, if you feel that the way your complaint was handled by the school was unfair, you can complain to the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO).

If the complaint is about discrimination, your parent or guardian may complain to the Equality Tribunal. If the complaint is about a data protection issue, you can complain to the Data Protection Commissioner (details at the back of this guide).

For parents and guardians

How do I make a complaint to my child's school?

If you want to make a complaint about your child's education or treatment, you should follow these steps:

1. Speak directly to your child's teacher, following the usual arrangements for this.
2. If the matter remains unresolved, speak to the school principal.
3. If necessary, and if the complaint concerns a teacher, write formally to the school principal.
4. If the complaint is not resolved by the principal, write to the chairperson of the Board of Management of the school. The chairperson will refer the complaint to a sub-committee which will investigate and reply to you.
5. If you do not agree with the outcome (result) of the investigation, write to the chairperson appealing the decision.
6. If you are not satisfied with the response of the chairperson then you can complain to the Ombudsman for Children (OCO). See page 71 of this pack for contact details.

2.8 Bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is negative behaviour by a person or group against you which is repeated over time. Bullying can be verbal, psychological or physical and can take place to your face, by phone, online or through social media. Bullying behaviour can take many forms including:

- deliberately excluding you from a group or activity;
- nasty gossip about you;
- placing an offensive or hurtful message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum or website where it can be viewed or repeated by other people;
- bullying based on your identity (that is bullying because you are gay or transgender, of a different race, a Traveller, have a disability or have special educational needs).

If you are being bullied, you have a right to be protected. No-one should bully you for any reason. For more information about bullying, please see the section on taking part in the online community on page 14.

What should the school do if I am being bullied or if I report a friend being bullied?

First, you should tell your teacher, school principal or other trusted adult about the bullying. Schools must have a policy for dealing with bullying. This should state clearly that bullying is unacceptable. The school should have:

- procedures (instructions) for investigating and dealing with bullying;
- procedures to help those affected by bullying;
- strategies to prevent bullying happening in the first place; and
- a record of measures they take to tackle bullying.

2.9 Privacy in school

Do I have a right to privacy in school?

Privacy in school means attending school without any interference by the school in your private life, your personal space, your body or your belongings. There are some situations where a school can interfere with your privacy. For example, a teacher can search your bag if he or she believes that you are carrying illegal substances or alcohol. However, both you and your parent or guardian must agree to this.

Your parent or guardian must be present if a teacher wants to search you, for example, to check what is in your pockets.

Your locker is school property but you are entitled to privacy while the locker is assigned to you during the school year. A teacher may search your locker if he or she has a good reason for doing so. The teacher should tell you the reason for the search.

Do my parents have a right to know how I am doing in school?

Your parents or guardian have a right to be kept informed about your education and behaviour in school. This is usually done through school reports, which parents receive once a year, and through parent-teacher meetings.

Do I have a right to see my school records?

Not until you reach 18 years of age. This is when the school has to make school records available to you if you ask for them. If you are under 18, your parent or guardian can access school records on your behalf.

2.10 Cost of school

For parents and guardians Can I get financial assistance to help pay for the costs of school?

You can apply for support from the Department of Social Protection to help with the cost of your child's schooling. There are a number of grants available. These are means-tested so, to qualify, you will have to meet a number of conditions.

The types of financial assistance include:

- the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance;
- the School Books Grant scheme; and
- no exam fees for medical card holders.

You can find out more on the website of the Department of Social Protection, www.welfare.ie.

Some schools have their own schemes to help parents with costs. To find out if your child's school has a scheme, contact the school.

2.11 Special educational needs

If you have special educational needs, you have the right to education that is suitable to your needs.

Where can I go to school if I have special educational needs?

You can be educated in:

- a mainstream class in a mainstream primary or post-primary school;
- a special class in a mainstream primary or post-primary school which has fewer students than other classes; or
- a special school for students with special educational needs.

The law says that children with special educational needs should, where possible, be educated in a mainstream school with children who do not have special needs. This should happen unless it would not be in your best interests or the best interests of the other children in the school.

Do I have a right to additional supports if I go to a mainstream primary school?

You may be given additional teaching support from a learning support or resource teacher. You may also be given access to a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) if you have significant care needs to help you with practical tasks, such as getting around the school. All primary schools have a number of learning support or resource teachers and

you will not necessarily need to be assessed to access these teaching supports. It is up to the school to decide how to share these teachers.

A primary school can also apply to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for additional teaching support or access to SNA support if you have a more severe disability, such as a hearing impairment or autistic spectrum disorder. A formal assessment will be required to access this support and the support of an SNA.

If I had additional supports in primary school, will I get them at post-primary level?

You will not automatically get additional supports such as extra teaching support or a Special Needs Assistant when you go to post-primary school. However, if you have an ongoing need, the school may provide you with some additional learning support from its existing learning support resources, or it may apply to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for additional resources. This means that your parents or guardian will have to submit medical reports about your specific needs so the NCSE can assess whether to give additional supports including SNA support if you continue to require it.

2.12 School transport

Bus Éireann operates a school transport scheme for the Department of Education and Skills to provide transport to and from school for children who do not live near their school.

For parents and guardians Is my child eligible for school transport?

If your child is in primary school, they may be eligible for school transport if they live more than 3.2km from the nearest suitable national school. To be eligible for school transport at second-level, your child must live over 4.8km from the nearest suitable post-primary school and attend that school.

If your child has a special educational need arising from a diagnosed disability, they may be eligible for transport under a special scheme. To find out more see the Department of Education's website, www.education.ie, under 'school transport'.

If I am unhappy about a school transport decision affecting my child, can I appeal it?

Yes. You may appeal some decisions under the School Transport Scheme to the School Transport Appeals Board. There is no charge for making an appeal. You can find information about the Schools Transport Appeals Board on the Department of Education and Skills website, www.education.ie, under 'bodies and committees'.



3. MY RIGHT TO HEALTH



3.1 Healthcare

Do I have a right to healthcare?

Yes. Anybody in Ireland with a medical emergency has the right to attend their local hospital accident and emergency department. There may be a cost for this unless you have been referred by your family doctor (GP) or you hold a medical card.

Some health services are free. These include maternity and infant care, health services for pre-school children, school health services, vaccinations and immunisation services.

What free healthcare will I get in school?

Every child is entitled to school health services. If you are under six or if you attend a national school, you will get free health examinations. These usually include immunisations against particular infectious diseases, developmental checks, visits by public health nurses, child welfare clinics and school health examinations. Private primary schools may ask for the service and the Health Service Executive can decide (or not) to extend the service to these schools.

If any problems are found with your teeth, sight or hearing during the school health check they will be treated free of charge. You also have a right to free dental services up to the age of 15 years, if you are attending school.

Do I have a right to a medical card?

A medical card entitles you to free hospital care, doctor visits, medical appliances and dental, eyesight and hearing services. You may be entitled to a medical card based on your parents' or guardian's income. If you are in State care, you will get a medical card.

If you live at home and your parent or guardian has a medical card, you will be covered by this card. If you are between 16 and 25 years of age and are financially dependent on your parents or guardian, you are entitled to a medical card if they have one.

If your parents or guardian do not qualify for a medical card, they may get a GP visit card. This will cover you and let you visit the doctor for free. If you are over 16, you may qualify for a GP Visit Card in your own name. Some families choose to buy private health insurance.



3.2 Consent

At what age can I give my consent to medical treatment?

Giving consent means giving permission for surgical, medical or dental treatment. If you are under 16 years, your parents or guardian must consent to any surgical, medical or dental treatment you receive. However, you should be told about the treatment and your views or concerns should be listened to and taken into account.

If you are over 16, you can consent to surgical, medical or dental treatment, including any treatment or tests needed to find out what is making you feel unwell. However, doctors and hospitals will usually also look for the consent of your parents or guardian before they carry out any tests or treatment even if you are over 16 years.

You must be 18 to consent to mental health treatment.

Can I refuse to give consent to medical treatment?

You will not usually be allowed to refuse treatment if your doctor believes it is in your best interests and your parents or guardian agree. The doctor should help you to understand the importance of having the treatment.



Do I have a right to see my health records?

You can see your health records when you are 18 years of age. If you are under 18, your parents or guardian can access them on your behalf. In some cases, you or your parents or guardian may not get access to your health records if a doctor or hospital thinks it is not in your best interests.

3.3 Confidentiality

Can I visit the doctor on my own without my parent or guardian?

Yes. But while you are under the age of 18 years the doctor cannot promise that he or she will not tell your parents or guardian about your treatment.

Do I have a right to confidentiality with my doctor?

No. If you are under 16, your doctor must tell your parents or guardian except in very rare cases. Even if you are over the age of 16, the doctor cannot give you a guarantee of confidentiality as your parents or guardian have a right to ask for access to your medical records until you are 18. But, if your doctor thinks that it would not be in your best interests for your parents to know about your visit, they will not tell them.

If a doctor or nurse is concerned that you or another child is being harmed in any way or at risk of being harmed, the law says they must report their concern to the Child and Family Agency, Tusla.

3.4 Children with disabilities

For information on educational rights for children with disabilities see section 2 on the right to education.

Am I entitled to support for my disability?

If you have a disability that affects your ability to move, communicate or learn, you may be entitled to get help from the disability support services. Depending on the type of disability you have, you and your parents or guardian may also be eligible for financial supports. These include:

- **Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA).** Your parents or guardian may get this payment if you are under 16 years of age and have a severe disability that has continued or is expected to last for at least a year, and which means that you need substantially more care than another child of your age.

Your parents or guardian must meet a number of conditions to qualify for this payment (including residency (living) requirements). You can find out more about these on www.welfare.ie/en/pdf/domcare1.pdf.

For instance, you must be living at home and in continuous care. If you are in residential care but return home two or more days a week, your parents or guardian may qualify for a reduced rate of payment.

- **Disability Allowance Payment.** You may be eligible for this payment if you are over 16 years of age and have an injury, disease or physical or mental disability that has continued or is expected to last for at least a year. This payment is means-tested, which means your family's income must be below a certain amount for you to get the payment.

Can my family get help to adapt my house to make it more accessible for me?

If you have a disability that is recognised by the Health Service Executive (HSE), your parents or guardian may be eligible for a grant to help pay for the cost of adapting your home. You can find out more about these grants and supports from the Citizens Information Service (www.citizensinformation.ie) or from the housing department of your Local Authority (see www.environ.ie for contact details).

For parents and guardians Is my child entitled to an assessment of their needs?

Any child born after 1 June 2002 is entitled to a free assessment of their health and educational needs carried out by an assessment officer from the HSE Disability Services. After the assessment, you will receive an assessment report. This will outline:

- if your child has a disability;
- the type of disability and how severe it is;
- the health and educational needs arising from the disability;
- the services considered best to meet those needs and when your child will receive them; and
- when the HSE should review the assessment.

You will also get a document called a service statement which sets out the health and education services that your child needs. This takes account of the assessment report, whether your child is eligible for services, relevant standards and codes of practice, the practicality of providing the service and the financial resources available.

To apply for an assessment for your child, contact the assessment officer at your Local Health Office. If you are not satisfied, you can complain to the HSE and you can appeal their finding to the independent Office of the Disability Appeals Officer (see contact details on page 79 of this guide).

3.5 Mental health Why is looking after mental health important?

Looking after your mental health is as important as looking after your physical health. At different times in your life your mental health may be affected by what is going on around you. Many everyday things can affect your mental health or sometimes a big event, such as the death of someone you love, can affect you.

Where can I get help?

If you feel you may need help, there are many online supports and telephone helplines that you can use. If you are worried about yourself or a friend, talk to your family or look for help from youth mental health organisations and groups. You could also talk to a counsellor, a friend, or ask for support through your school.

A first step may be to talk to your doctor about what help you may need. Your doctor can address most mental health issues directly or with the help of therapy that may be available in your community. Sometimes, you may need medicines or to stay in a hospital as part of the treatment.

Where can I get information about mental health?

There are several online and telephone resources for young people which give information on different areas of mental health. These include:

- Let Someone Know
- Reachout
- Headstrong / Jigsaw
- St Patrick's Mental Health Services Support and Information Helpline (9 am to 5 pm): 01 249 3333

You can find further details of these on pages 77-78 of this guide.

At what age can I consent to mental health treatment?

Any decision regarding your mental health or treatment for a problem that you are experiencing should take your best interests into account. You must be 18 years old to give or refuse consent to mental health treatment. If you are under 18, your parents or guardian may give consent on your behalf.

If I am hospitalised, how long will I have to stay?

The length of stay in hospital is different for everyone. Most young people are admitted to hospital voluntarily (this means that you, your parents or guardian, and the doctors have made the decision to go to hospital together). The doctors will aim to keep you in hospital until you are better. Your parents have the right to take you home at any time. If your parents feel that you should be in hospital and you do not wish to be there, you can ask your treatment team to review the decision.

What is involuntary detention?

Involuntary detention happens when the doctors in charge of your care ask the District Court for permission to keep you in hospital. This can happen if your treatment team feels that your discharge from hospital may pose a risk to yourself or others. It can also happen if your parents or guardian decide to take you out of hospital and the doctors think you are not ready or well enough to leave.

The court can order that you be kept in hospital for up to 21 days. This order can be renewed for periods of three or six months. Your doctors will continually review your mental health. You and your parents or guardian may be asked for your views. When your doctors feel that you are well enough, they will ask the court to withdraw the involuntary detention order.

Who has the right to information about my mental health?

Your treatment team, your parents or your guardian have the right to information about your mental health. Your information will not be shared with anyone else unless you want it to be, or unless it could be used as evidence of a crime.

3.6 Sexual health

Why is it important to know my rights and to look after my sexual health?

It is important to know the law around sex and giving your consent to having sex. If you decide to have sex, it is important to know how to protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and against an unwanted pregnancy.

At what age can I legally consent to have sex?

At 17. This is the same whether you are straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual.

At what age can I buy condoms?

Any age. There is no age restriction on buying condoms.

At what age can I get other forms of contraception?

You can access all forms of contraception at 17, which is the legal age of consent to have sex. For some forms of contraception, such as the contraceptive pill, you will need a prescription from a doctor. The law is unclear as to your right to be prescribed contraception if you are under 17. Some doctors will prescribe contraceptives to young people under 17, but others will refuse.

If you are over the age of 16, you can get emergency contraception (known as the 'morning-after pill') from a pharmacist without the consent of your parents or guardian. If you are under 16, the pharmacist will usually look for the consent of your parents or guardian.

Does the doctor have to tell my parent or guardian if I ask for contraception?

If you are **16 or over**, you can discuss contraception with your doctor without your parents' or guardian's consent or knowledge. If you are **under 16**, your parents or guardian have a right to know if you have been given medical treatment, including a prescription for the pill or any other form of contraception.

If you are concerned about giving information to the doctor, you should clarify this with the doctor at the beginning of the consultation.

Where can I get more information about sexual health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

There are a number of sexual health clinics around Ireland. They are also known as STI or Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics. They will give you support whatever your sexual orientation. For details of these services, visit www.b4udecide.ie or www.thinkcontraception.ie.

Will I be reported to social services or the Gardaí if I am sexually active or pregnant and under 17?

The law states that 17 years is the age of consent to sex. It is an offence to have sex with anyone under the age of 17 years. However, you will only be reported to social services or the Gardaí if there is a suspicion or allegation that you have been harmed or are a victim of a crime. For more information, see www.positiveoptions.ie and www.crisispregnancy.ie.

You can find contact details for organisations providing information and resources on sexual health on pages 76-77 of this guide.

3.7 Pregnancy

Where can I get advice and support if I think I might be pregnant?

You can visit your GP (doctor) or local health centre for advice and support. There are free, non-judgemental crisis pregnancy counselling services all around Ireland. For a list of these, visit www.positiveoptions.ie or text the word 'LIST' for free to 50444.

Can I go for counselling for a crisis pregnancy without my parents or guardian knowing?

If you ring a counselling service, you can ask over the phone about their policy on seeing someone under 18 without the consent of a parent or guardian. Some services will talk to you about how to tell your parents or guardian, and they will support you in doing that. Other services will only see you if your parent or guardian comes with you.

Are there any special support services for teenage or young parents?

Some maternity hospitals run a Teen Pregnancy Support Programme (TPSP) for young parents under 19 years of age until their child reaches two years of age. The TPSP is a community-based service funded by the HSE which is available in 11 locations. It gives free, confidential information and advice to young parents and other family members such as grandparents.

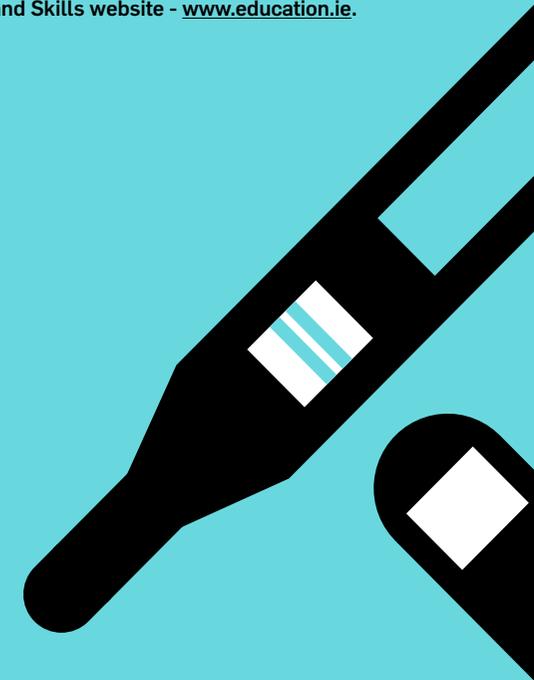
The TPSP will tell you about your rights, entitlements and responsibilities as a young parent and can give you information on welfare, accommodation, education, training, childcare and other support services. For more information on this service, see www.tpsp.ie or see pages 81-82 of this guide.

Can I get free medical care while pregnant?

Yes. You are entitled to free pregnancy care under the Maternity and Infant Scheme until your baby is six weeks old. This covers doctor visits, ante-natal clinics, the maternity hospital when your baby is born and two check-ups after the birth. Contact your GP (doctor) or your local health centre for more information. You can also get more information on the scheme on the HSE website, www.hse.ie.

Can I still go to school if I am pregnant?

Yes. You are entitled to continue your education if you are pregnant. You may be entitled to financial assistance for schooling at home under the Home Tuition Grant Scheme. This scheme pays for nine hours of schooling a week for 10 weeks. It is usually given to students who need to be absent from school in the later stages of pregnancy or immediately following the birth of the baby. To access this scheme, contact the Special Needs and Tuition Grants section of the Department of Education and Skills website - www.education.ie.



4. MY RIGHT TO PROTECTION FROM HARM

4.1 Adequate care and protection

Do I have a right to be protected from abuse?

Yes. No matter what age you are, you have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation. The State has a legal duty to look after your welfare. There are laws and organisations in Ireland that work to protect children from possible abuse and to investigate and punish abusers. The Gardaí and Director of Public Prosecutions may have a role to play in prosecuting people that harm children and young people.

What is abuse?

There are four types of child abuse: neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. A child may suffer from one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Neglect is when an adult fails to take care of you and this causes you significant harm or stops you developing properly. Neglect may include:

- not being properly fed, kept warm or clothed;
- not being kept safe;
- not getting attention and affection from adults;
- not bringing you to school;
- not getting medical care for you, if you need it.

Neglect is something that happens over time and not just at one specific point.

Emotional abuse usually happens when an adult is not affectionate or supportive. Emotional abuse can also occur if you are regularly made to feel unsafe. This form of abuse is more about the kind of relationship you have with an adult rather than particular incidents that take place. It can result in you feeling insecure, unhappy, having low self-esteem and underachieving in school or in other aspects of your life.

Physical abuse happens when an adult causes you harm through physical punishment or by not taking action to stop you from being physically hurt when it is possible to do so. This type of abuse includes severe physical punishment or deliberately hurting you. It can include, but is not limited to, slapping, hitting, pinching, watching someone else hurt you and not stopping it, and terrorising you with threats.

Sexual abuse or exploitation happens when an adult uses you for sexual purposes. This may include touching you in a wrong way, having sex with you, forcing you to watch an adult engage in sexual acts, and showing you material of a sexual nature. It may also include wrongful sexual relationships between you and an adult, trafficking and being used for prostitution.

What should I do if I feel that I am not being treated well, do not feel safe or have been abused?

You have a right to be protected from all forms of abuse. The most important thing, if you experience any kind of abuse at home, school or anywhere else, is that you tell someone you trust so they can help and support you.

You or an adult you trust should contact your local social worker in the Child and Family Agency, Tusla. To find out their contact details see www.tusla.ie or call the HSE National Information Line, LoCall 1850 24 1850.

If you need help in an emergency or outside office hours, contact your nearest Garda station or ring the emergency phone line, either 999 or 112.

If you want advice about abuse or neglect or are worried about yourself or a friend, you can talk to Childline. This is a confidential and free service for children. You can contact Childline by phone on 1800 66 66 66. You can also text 'Talk' to 50101 or you can chat with someone online at www.childline.ie. See pages 75-76 of this guide for other support organisations.

What is the role of social workers?

Social workers are part of a service that is provided by the Child and Family Agency, Tusla. They help and support children who may be at risk of harm or who are not safe. It is the job of social workers to protect and support you if you are feeling unsafe at home or in your life.

How do I contact a social worker?

Social workers are available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. There are social workers across Ireland. To contact a social worker in your area, you will need to contact your local Tusla social work duty service. You can do this by telephone, email or by calling into the office.

You can get contact details for social workers by:

- ringing your local social worker office (the number is on the Tusla website, www.tusla.ie);
- calling the HSE National Information Line, LoCall 1850 24 1850.

What is the role of An Garda Síochána?

An Garda Síochána is the national police service in Ireland. It is their job to make sure you are safe and do not come to any harm. There are local Garda stations across Ireland. The Garda emergency free telephone number is 999 or 112. The Gardaí are available 24 hours a day.

What kinds of family supports are available to help me and my family?

Family support services are available to help you and your family deal with difficult situations such as separation, the death of someone close to you or addictions. These supports may include counselling, support groups, social worker visits or working with family support workers. The support services will do all they can to make sure that you can stay with your family, if that is in your best interests. You can get more information on these supports through the Child and Family Agency, Tusla - www.tusla.ie.

For parents, guardians and other adults

What should I do if I suspect a child is not getting adequate care or protection or is being abused?

Contact the duty social worker in the Child and Family Agency in the child's local area (see above on how to contact a social worker).

If it is outside office hours, and you feel the child is in immediate danger, you should contact the Gardaí on 999 or 112.

You can find out more information about child abuse and how to respond to it by reading the Children First Guidance, available on Tusla's website, www.tusla.ie.

What can I do to protect my child from abuse within the home?

You can apply to the court for an order to protect you and your child from domestic violence. A court can make a Protection Order which prevents someone from threatening to use violence or fear against you and your family. If the person does not live with you, the Protection Order prevents them from hanging around or watching your house. A Protection Order lasts until you get a full court hearing. At this stage the court can decide to grant a longer-term order (called a Safety Order) or an order to prevent the violent person from being in the home (a Barring Order).

There are also many services which offer short and longer-term refuge for those looking to escape domestic violence. If you are currently experiencing domestic violence or if you wish to access a refuge, legal advice, emotional support or advice on available services, there are a number of organisations that can help you. Please go to pages 75-76 of this guide for details.

You can also call the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline on 1800 341 900 for advice and help.

4.2 Children in state care What is care?

State care means that the Child and Family Agency, Tusla gets involved in your care if it decides that you are not being properly cared for at home. If you are taken into care you will either live in a foster family (which may be with relatives) or in a residential care home.

How could I be taken into care?

There are different ways that children and young people can be taken into care. If your parents and the Child and Family Agency both **agree** that it is not in your best interests to live at home, your parents can agree to you being taken into care (this is called voluntary care).

If your parents do **not agree** that you should go into State care but the Child and Family Agency thinks there is good reason to remove you from your home, it must go to court and ask a judge to order that you be taken into care (under a care order). If the judge agrees, the judge will grant a care order for a short time. The social workers must assess your situation before a long-term plan for your care is agreed. You will be asked for your views on this.

If the court makes a care order and you are taken into state care against your parents' wishes, they may appeal the order to the court.

Supervision order: this order allows the Child and Family Agency to monitor a child it considers to be at risk. You are not removed from your home. A supervision order may last up to 12 months.

Voluntary care: your parents can make an arrangement with the social worker that you go into state care without going to court.

Interim care order: this order can be made while waiting on a decision on a full care order. You will be placed in the care of the Child and Family Agency for up to 28 days although the District Court can extend this time.

Care order: this order allows you to be removed from the care of your parents and placed in the care of the Child and Family Agency. A care order can continue until you reach 18 years.

Emergency care order: this order places you in the care of the Child and Family Agency for up to eight days.

Who is responsible for me while I am in care?

Usually, the Child and Family Agency (through your social worker) will take all the important decisions such as the kind of care you need and where you should live.

If you are in foster care or residential care, your foster carers or the carers in the residential centre will be in charge of the day-to-day decisions affecting your life. If your parents have agreed that you should go into care (voluntary care), they still have the right to take part in all decisions affecting your life.

If an interim care order is granted, your parents must still be consulted about most things in your life. Even if you are placed under a full care order, your parents can still make some important decisions about you, for example in relation to your education and the type of school you can attend.

Can I choose where I live when I am in care?

No. You cannot decide for yourself where you will live. Your social worker and the Child and Family Agency will decide for you but your social worker should listen and take into consideration your views. In most cases, children will live with a foster family or with relatives (these are known as relative foster carers). Some children may live in a children's residential centre. As far as possible, you will stay living in your community.

What are my rights if I am taken into care?

You have a number of rights if taken into care. The Child and Family Agency has a duty to make sure that any decisions about your care are made in your best interests. Your social worker should tell you what is happening but the amount that you are told will depend on your age. You have a right to have your views heard when decisions about your care are being made. Your wishes should be taken into account, as far as possible.

If a care order is sought in the court, the judge must take your wishes into account if he or she feels you are mature enough to understand what is happening.

Do I have a right to have access to a social worker?

Yes. Every child in care must be given access to social worker. The social worker is employed by the Child and Family Agency. He or she will meet with you to support you and give you whatever information or advice you need. It is your social worker's job to draw up a care plan for you and to put it into action.

If I don't have a social worker, who should I contact?

If you do not have a social worker, you should contact your local social work office and ask for one. You may also contact EPIC (www.epiconline.ie) which provides a range of services for children in care and leaving care. See page 39 for contact details on how to contact your local social work office.

What is a care plan?

Before you are placed in care (either in foster care or residential care), a social worker must prepare a care plan for you. Your care plan must state:

1. the aims of your care placement;
2. the support the Child and Family Agency will give you, your foster carers or the residential centre and, in some cases, your parents;
3. the access arrangements made between you and your parent(s), relative(s) or anyone else who has the right to have contact with you;
4. when your care plan will be reviewed.

If you were placed in care in an emergency situation, the Child and Family Agency must prepare your care plan as soon as possible after the emergency placement.

When will my care arrangements be reviewed?

A meeting called a 'child in care review' should take place **two months after you first enter care** to review how you are getting on. The review should then be repeated every six months for the first two years of your placement in care. After this, your care plan should be reviewed at least once a year.

Can I go to the child in care review?

Yes. Your social worker should tell you when the review meetings will take place. You have a right to attend these meetings and to give your views. Other people such as your parents, teachers, counsellors, foster carers or other people working with you may also be at these meetings. You have the right to be told about any decisions that are made as a result of these care plan reviews.

Do I have a right to know what is in my care plan?

Yes. You should know and understand the key points in your care plan. At any time you can ask your social worker or a residential care staff member to explain to you what is in your care plan.

Do I have a right to have my views heard in court when decisions are made about my care?

Yes, but the court has different ways of hearing your views. This depends on your age and level of maturity, and on the wishes of the judge. Your social worker will be in court and will tell the judge about your needs. In some cases, the judge might appoint a Guardian ad Litem. This is someone who makes sure that the judge hears your views and advises the judge on what is in your best interest.

The judge may want to speak to you directly. While the judge might listen to your views, he or she may not agree that what you want is the best course of action for you. The Guardian ad Litem may also have a different view from you as to what they think is in your best interests.

Do I have a right to be present in court when my case is being heard?

No. The judge will decide if it is in your best interests and if you need to be present in court when your case is being heard. In general, young people are not present during court proceedings.

Do I have a right to have my privacy protected in court?

Yes. When your case is being heard in court, only certain people will be allowed to be present and to report on the case. They are not allowed to share any information that would identify you in public – such as in the newspapers or online. Your name, address and image cannot be made public.

Do I have a right to leave care and go home?

No, you cannot decide to leave care until you are 18.

If you are in care under a voluntary arrangement, your parents may withdraw their consent for you to be in care and take you home. If this happens and your social worker is not happy that your needs will be met by going home, the social worker may ask for a care order from the court to keep you in care.

If you are in care under a care order, a court may decide that the reasons you were taken into care in the first place have changed and it has no further concerns about your safety or welfare. If this happens, you can go home. You have a right to have your views heard in this decision.

Do I have a right to contact with my family while in care?

Yes. While you are in foster care or residential care, the Child and Family Agency must make sure that you have reasonable contact with and access to your parents or guardian and other relatives unless the judge thinks it is not safe or in your best interests. This contact can take the form of visits, phone calls or letters or emails. The Child and Family Agency should also make sure that you have contact with anyone else who has an interest in your care such as a grandparent, aunt or family friend.

Have I a right to practise my religion (if any) in care?

Yes. You have the right to practise your religion, if you have one, while in care. The Child and Family Agency must do what it can to enable you to practise your religion. The Child and Family Agency must also take your religion and the wishes of your parents into account when placing you with a foster family.

What are my rights if I am not happy in care?

You have the right to ask to see your social worker at any time while you are in care. Someone from the Child and Family Agency should visit you during your first month in care, then every three months during the first two years that you are in care and every six months after that. If there is a problem with your care, the Child and Family Agency must make sure that your welfare is protected. If you are not happy with your care, you have the right to:

- make a complaint to the Child and Family Agency;
- know and understand the complaints procedure (someone must explain it to you);
- be supported in making your complaint, for example, by a parent or an independent advocate (someone acting on your behalf);
- know the outcome (result) of your complaint; and
- get a written copy of any decisions made about you.

If you are not happy with the complaints process, you have the right to complain to the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO). You may also contact EPIC (www.epiconline.ie) which provides a range of services for children in care and leaving care. See pages 71 and 80 of this guide for contact details for these organisations.

For parents, guardians and others with an interest in the child's welfare

Can I ask the Child and Family Agency to review the placement of a child in care?

Yes. If you have a genuine interest in the welfare of a child in care, you can ask in writing that the Child and Family Agency carry out a special review of the child's placement. If the Child and Family Agency decides not to do so, it must tell you in writing and give reasons for its decision.

- For more information on aftercare, contact EPIC – see page 80 for contact details.
- Focus Ireland has aftercare support services in Dublin, Limerick and Waterford – see page 80 for contact details.
- Focus Ireland, EPIC and Empower Ireland have produced a guide for young people leaving care. You can ask Focus Ireland for a copy by ringing (01) 881 5900 or emailing info@focusireland.ie. You can also get a copy online at www.focusireland.ie.

What is a Special Care Unit and could I be sent to one?

The behaviour of some children and young people places their life, health, safety or development in danger. In these rare occasions, a social worker may ask the court for a child or young person to be detained for their own welfare or protection in a Special Care Unit in Ireland or abroad.

A Special Care Unit is a secure locked unit where children or young people aged 11 to 17 years are placed by the High Court when they are considered a risk to their own health or safety. Compared with other care settings, Special Care Units have more staff. They also have educational, therapeutic and specialised supports to help the child or young person overcome behavioural difficulties or other problems. The aim is to provide intense, short-term care to help the young person become more stable so they can return to regular care as soon as possible.

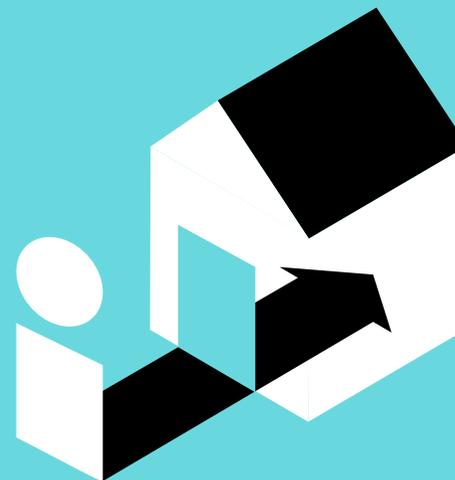
What are my rights if I am placed in a Special Care Unit?

Only a High Court judge can order that you be placed in a Special Care Unit. Your social worker and possibly a Guardian ad Litem will represent you in court and give the judge your views, but you are **not entitled to a solicitor**. A placement can be for three to six months. After this time, the court must review the placement. The court itself can decide to change the order placing you in a Special Care Unit or the Child and Family Agency can ask it to do so.

What are my rights if I am homeless or in need of emergency care?

If you are homeless and without your family, or if you are in crisis and need emergency care, you should contact your local social worker in the Child and Family Agency, Tusla (www.tusla.ie). If it is after 5pm and the office is closed, you should contact your local Garda station where a member of the Gardaí will contact a social worker for you. There are also a number of organisations, such as Focus Ireland, who work with young people who find themselves homeless. See pages 80 and 81 for contact details.

The social worker will assess your needs and try to find accommodation or care for you. The social worker may contact your family if it is appropriate to do so. Or, the social worker may take you into care or place you in emergency homeless accommodation. Emergency and homeless services are provided through the Crisis Intervention Service in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow and through the Emergency Place of Safety Service in the rest of the country.



5. MY RIGHTS IN THE FAMILY

5.1 General

Do I have a right to live with my family?

Yes. You have a right to live with your family if this is in your best interests.

What is guardianship?

Guardianship is the collection of rights and duties which a parent has for their child. A guardian has a duty to maintain and properly care for the child and has the right to make decisions in the major areas of the child's life such as choice of religion (if any), choice of school, adoption, consenting to medical treatment, passports and decisions about leaving the country.

Your guardian is the person who has 'guardianship rights' – legal responsibility – for you. This is usually your mother and father but can also be another relative or person.

Who is my guardian?

If your parents were married to each other when you were born, they are automatically your guardians.

If your mother was not married when you were born, she is automatically your guardian but your unmarried father is not automatically considered your guardian. He can become your guardian by marrying your mother, through a joint agreement with your mother or by applying to a court.

If your parents are a female same-sex couple, your biological mother will be your automatic guardian. If your parents are a male same-sex couple, your biological father can seek guardianship. At the moment your non-biological parent cannot gain guardianship rights for you, but the law in this area may change soon.

If one of my parents enters a relationship, does their new partner automatically become my guardian?

No. If your mother or father's partner is not your biological parent then he or she cannot become your guardian. The only exception is if your parent marries the new partner. In this case, the new partner can formally adopt you with the consent of your other biological parent.

Do my relatives have the right to make decisions about me?

Not usually. However, if your parents were unable to look after you because of an illness or if, for example, they died, a relative could apply to the court to become your guardian and have the right to take legal decisions about you and to exercise your rights on your behalf. Your parents could also nominate someone to take on this role in their will in the event that they die.

At what age can I move out of home?

You can leave home at 16 if your parent or guardian agrees. You can leave without consent when you reach 18.

5.2 Changes in my family situation

What happens to me if my parents split up?

Ideally, your parents will decide:

- how they will share the day-to-day responsibilities of taking care of you;
- where you will live;
- whether you will live with one of them or share your time with both;
- how often you will see each parent and for how long; and
- how much each of them can afford to pay towards running the home.

If your parents cannot agree on these issues, someone else will have to get involved to help your parents to decide. This could be a mediator, a lawyer or a judge in a court.



Do I have a right to a say in these decisions?

No. Your parents will make these decisions. If your parents get help from the Family Mediation Service, you may be invited to attend a session with your parents to discuss the arrangements they have made. If your parents cannot agree and the matter goes to court, the judge may ask for your views but you will not be directly involved in any court proceedings.

Do I have a right to see both of my parents if they split up?

Yes, in most situations. Arrangements will usually be made for you to see both parents unless there is a concern for your safety. If your parents cannot agree about this, the court may be asked to decide for them. Step-parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters and brothers may also apply to the court for the right to see you. The court will allow this if it is in your best interests.

If you are unhappy with the amount of time you spend with either parent, try to explain your point of view to them. You might want to get help from organisations that work with children and young people such as Teen Between. See page 81 of this guide for contact details.

Do I have a right to financial support from my parents?

Your parents have a duty to support you financially until you are 18. If your parents separate or divorce, they must both provide for you. If they cannot agree, the court will decide based on your parents' income and other family responsibilities. A step-parent who is not your legal guardian does not have to continue to financially support you.

5.3 Young parents (under 18)

The law has different rules depending on your relationship with your child and your status as a parent (whether you are married or single). Also see section 3.7 of this guide.

Can I go to school after the child is born?

Yes. By law, you must be in school until you are 16 years of age. You may miss some time at school during your pregnancy or after your baby is born, so it is a good idea to talk to a teacher or the school principal about making up for lost time or joining the Home Tuition Scheme which lets you learn from home.

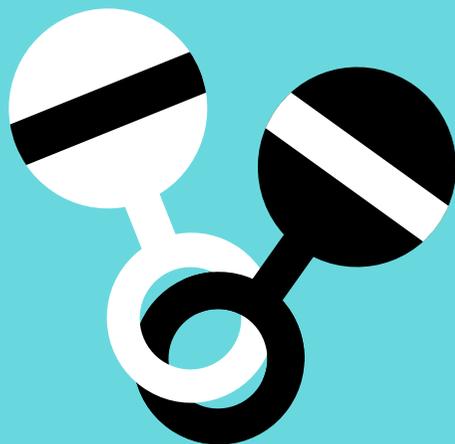
If you are due to have your baby around the time of your Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate exams, you should ask your school to make arrangements for you to do your exams separately and in more comfort. If you cannot complete your exams, you can always go back to school after the child is born.

How will I pay for all the things my baby needs?

There are a range of supports available to you from the Department of Social Protection including Child Benefit payments to help you to pay for the baby's needs. Your parent or guardian may be able to help you apply for these payments or you could contact the Department of Social Protection or your local Citizens Information Centre yourself. There are also special guides for young parents such as the Young Parents Survival Guide from the Teen Parents Support Programme - www.tpssp.ie. Visit www.treoir.ie or www.welfare.ie for more information.

Do I have rights as an unmarried mother?

Yes. You are automatically the child's legal guardian from birth and have full custody of your child.



Do I have to register the name of my child's father at birth?

You must register the birth of your child within three months of the birth. You do not currently have to record the details of the child's father if you are not married. A new law will change this rule soon, but at the time of going to print the procedures for this have not been finalised. However, it is generally in a child's best interests to have their father's name on the birth certificate. Many people assume that having the father's name on the child's birth certificate gives the father legal guardianship rights – but this is not so. Nor does it affect an unmarried mother's entitlement to One-Parent Family Payment.

You can find out more about registering the baby's birth from the General Registrar's Office on 1890 25 20 76. You can also get information on the Citizen's Information website at: www.citizensinformation.ie.

Do I have rights as an unmarried father?

You have no automatic rights if you are an unmarried father. You can apply for guardianship if the mother agrees. You do this by signing a guardianship form in front of a peace commissioner or commissioner for oaths. If the mother does not agree, you can apply for guardianship through the local district courts. The court may refuse to

appoint a father as a guardian if this is not in the best interests of his child. If the biological father and mother marry, the father will automatically become the child's guardian. You can get information on how to apply for guardianship, seek custody of your child or get access rights from Treoir (www.treoir.ie). You may also need to get legal advice. You can find out about how to get civil legal aid by visiting the Legal Aid Board's website on www.legalaidboard.ie or by phoning them on 1890 615 200.

You can also contact the Teen Parents Support Programme if you are a young father or a young father-to-be. See www.tpssp.ie to find out what parenting supports are available to you.

5.4 Adopted children What is adoption?

Adoption is a legal process which enables an adult to permanently become the legal parent of a child. In an adoption, the legal relationship between the child and the birth parent no longer exists and the adoptive parents have the same rights and duties as if the child was born into their family.

For parents and guardians

How can I place my child for adoption?

Only children born to unmarried parents can be placed for adoption. For more information, contact the social work team at your maternity hospital, your local Child and Family Agency adoption team, an adoption agency, the Adoption Authority or a pregnancy counselling service such as Positive Options. You can contact these agencies at any stage of a pregnancy or on the birth of your child. You can change your mind about the adoption at any time up to the point that an Adoption Order is made.

Treoir along with the Crisis Pregnancy Programme has produced an information booklet on the adoption process for parents thinking of placing their child for adoption. You can visit www.treoir.ie or call 1890 252 084 to speak to someone about your situation.

As a child's father do I have a right to be consulted before my child is placed for adoption?

Yes. As the child's father, you have the right to be consulted before your child can be placed for adoption by the mother, even if you do not have joint guardianship. If you have joint guardianship of the child, your consent is required before the adoption can go ahead. If you cannot be contacted, an order from the High Court is needed before the adoption can go ahead.

When can a child be adopted?

A child must be six weeks old before he or she can be placed for adoption. If you are older than seven years, the court must take your wishes into account having regard to your age and level of maturity before making the adoption order.

If I am adopted, do I get a new birth certificate?

Yes. If you have been adopted, a new birth certificate will be issued for you in the name of your adoptive parents and your name will be entered into the Adopted Children Register.

Do I have a right to see my original birth certificate?

No. There is no automatic right to see or get a copy of your original birth certificate.

Do I have a right to see my adoption records?

No. You do not have a right to your adoption records in Ireland. You can apply to the Adoption Authority of Ireland for details of your birth parents. However, the Adoption Authority has a duty to protect your birth mother's privacy unless she decides to give her consent to the release of records. If the Adoption Authority refuses your request, you can ask the High Court to review the decision.

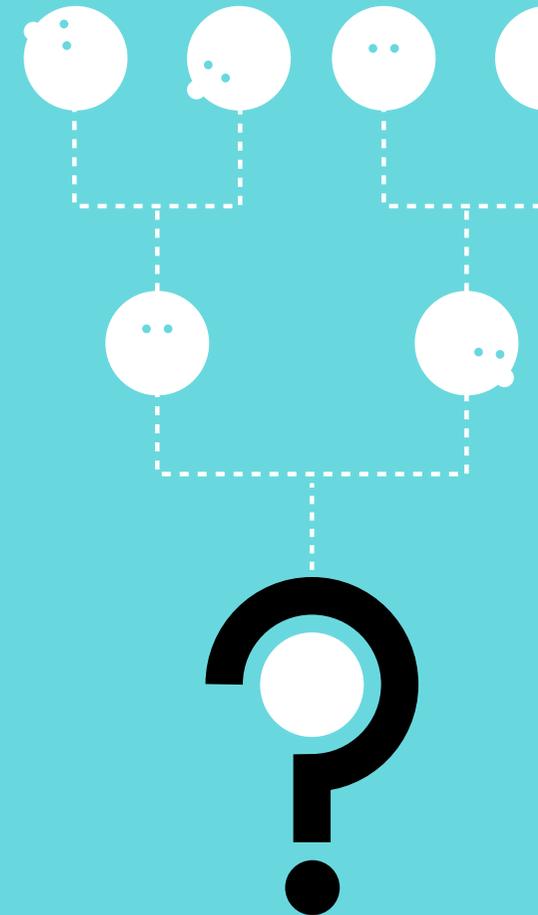
Do I have a right to have contact with my birth parents?

No. However, the Adoption Authority operates a National Adoption Contact Preference Register to make it easier for adopted people and their birth families to contact each other, if they both wish to do so. It is up to you to decide if you want to put your name on the Register but you must be over 18 to do so. You and your birth family will only be put in contact with each other if you have both registered.

The Register lets you choose what level of contact you wish to have. This can range from meeting your birth family to telephone calls, emails, letters or no contact at all.

Who can I talk to about being adopted?

If you want to talk to someone about your adoption, Barnardos runs a confidential telephone helpline on (01) 454 6388. You can also contact the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency or Childline if you have concerns – see pages 73, 75 and 81 of this guide for contact details.



6. MY RIGHTS AS A MIGRANT OR REFUGEE

Do migrant children have the same rights as other children in Ireland?

If you or your parents have come to Ireland from another country, you will be known as migrants. Migrant children or children of migrants have different rights and entitlements depending on their own or their parent's citizenship or immigration status. Ireland has rules about who can come here to live, work, study, visit as a tourist, seek asylum or start a business. These are known as immigration rules.

If you were born in Ireland but your parents are not Irish citizens or have no legal right to reside/live in Ireland, different immigration rules may apply to you.



6.1 Citizenship

Am I automatically an Irish citizen if I am born in Ireland?

No. If you were born in Ireland after 1 January 2005, you are entitled to be an Irish citizen only if:

- either one or both of your parents is Irish or British; or
- one of your parents was legally living (resident) in Ireland or Northern Ireland for at least three out of the four years immediately before you were born.

You will not qualify for Irish citizenship based on your birth in Ireland if your parents were:

- living in Ireland on a student visa;
- waiting for a decision on a claim for asylum or 'leave to remain' (this is explained on pages 57-60); or
- entitled to diplomatic immunity (this could relate to either of your parents).

How can I become an Irish citizen if I am not an Irish citizen through birth?

Those who are not entitled to become an Irish citizen through birth may make an application to become one under certain circumstances. Generally, you must be 18 years of age before you can apply in your own right. However, if you were born in Ireland after 1 January 2005 or one of your parents has become an Irish citizen, your parent or guardian can apply for citizenship on your behalf before you turn 18. You will need to meet certain conditions to qualify for citizenship.

There are a few other ways you could qualify to become an Irish citizen either as a child or an adult. You can qualify through:

- descent – if you were born outside Ireland but are the child or grandchild of an Irish citizen, you are entitled to Irish citizenship provided your birth is registered in the Foreign Births Register;
- naturalisation –
 - if you have lived in Ireland for a certain length of time and fulfill certain conditions; or
 - if you marry or are civilly partnered to an Irish citizen under certain conditions;
- adoption – if you are adopted by an Irish citizen or a couple where one spouse is an Irish citizen.

For more information about becoming an Irish citizen, visit the Citizens Information website at www.citizensinformation.ie.

What rules apply to me if I am an EU citizen or the family member of an EU citizen?

European Union citizens and their families are generally allowed to visit or live in any EU country if they are moving for a job, to look for work or to study. They may have to prove that they have health insurance and enough money to support themselves and their families while they are in Ireland.

Do I have a right to live in Ireland as an EU citizen even if my parent(s) are from outside the EU?

You may be entitled to live in Ireland but your parents must follow the immigration rules. If your parents are legally living in Ireland, they are entitled to live here with you if they follow the conditions attached to their immigration status which they will have received from the Department of Justice and Equality.

Even if your parents are not allowed to live in Ireland, you may be able to stay. This is a complicated area of law and depends on many things. You should ask a solicitor for advice about your particular situation.

What rules apply to me if I am not an EU citizen?

You must be registered with An Garda Síochána (Ireland's police service).

- If you are under 16, you will be registered on your parents' registration certification.
- If you are over 16 and you are not an EU citizen or a citizen of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland, you must register with An Garda Síochána. They will give you a registration certificate called a Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) Card, and you must carry this with you at all times. If you are under 18 at the time of registration, you do not have to pay the registration fee.

Do I have the same right to access education as an Irish citizen?

Almost all migrant children have the same right to access education as Irish children. The only exception is the children of international students from outside the European Union. If your parents are in Ireland to study, they may have to prove that they have enough money to provide for you. They will have to get the permission of the Department of Education and Skills before you can attend a non-fee paying school. They may also have to pay an immigration levy (a special tax) for you to attend a non-fee paying school. The Department of Education and Skills has not finalised the rules on this or decided the amount of the levy.

If you are not an EU citizen you may have to pay for your higher education course of study but this will depend on what type of immigration status you have. You may be entitled to free tuition fees if you meet certain conditions such as living in Ireland for three of the past five years and have a certain immigration status before you start third-level education. If you become an EU citizen during your time studying you will not have to pay third-level fees for the remaining time you are studying. You should check with the institution where you wish to study to establish your entitlements to free fees. Information is also available on the website www.studentfinance.ie.

Do I have the same right to access health care services?

Every child has the same right to access healthcare. However, your right to free medical care through a medical card will depend on the immigration status of your parent(s).

If your parents are not EU citizens, they may need to have private health insurance and they will not be able to get a medical card for you. However, if you or your parents have applied for asylum or been granted refugee status, subsidiary protection (this is explained on page 57) or permission to stay in Ireland, they may be entitled to a medical card for you. There are special rules and income limits for this.

Do I have the same right to access social protection?

This will depend on your parents' legal status in Ireland.

Do I have the right to protection from neglect, harm and abuse?

Yes. No matter where you are from, all children and young people in Ireland have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and harm.

What can I do if my family don't live in Ireland but I want them to join me here?

This depends on why you are living in Ireland and whether you or your family members have any rights under EU law. If you are an Irish citizen or an EU citizen, your family members may have a right to live with you in Ireland under the EU Citizenship Directive or case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

If you have been granted refugee status, you are entitled to be joined by your parents. You can also apply for other family members, such as your sisters and brothers, to join you. However, the Minister for Justice and Equality does not have to approve the application. If you are not a refugee, you can apply for a visa or residence permit for a family member and say why you think they should be allowed to join you. However, the Minister does not have to approve the application.

6.2 Seeking asylum What is asylum?

The term asylum means the protection given by a government to someone who has left another country in order to escape being harmed. The term asylum is a general term that includes two specific types of protection that can be applied for in Ireland: **refugee status** and **subsidiary protection**. Refugee status is a form of legal protection that the State gives to people escaping persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion in their own country. Subsidiary protection is another form of protection given to persons fleeing torture, a death sentence or a serious risk of violence during war. If someone is granted asylum, they have been recognised as a refugee or as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection status in Ireland. An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for refugee status or subsidiary protection status.

How does the asylum application process work?

Usually, an individual or family will apply for asylum at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC). They can also apply for asylum at the airport or port when they enter Ireland.

Your parent or guardian may include you in their application for asylum and any decision on their case will then apply to you. If your parent or guardian makes a separate asylum

application for you, the State must consider it separately. If you were born after your parent(s) arrived in Ireland, they can also make an application for asylum for you.

You can find out more about the asylum application process at www.orac.ie and www.inis.gov.ie.

What are my rights if I apply for asylum?

If you are with your family, you will get accommodation and food through a system called direct provision. Your family will also get a medical card so you will be able to get free healthcare. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) runs the direct provision system and decides where you will live. RIA may also transfer you and your family to a different accommodation centre while you are in the direct provision system.

Your parent or parents will get a weekly payment of €19.10 each and €9.60 each for you and any sisters or brothers you may have. You may also get money for clothes, usually twice a year, but you do not have an automatic right to this. Your parents cannot receive Child Benefit or other social welfare payments for you.

You can go to primary and post-primary school on the same basis as an Irish child.

You have a right to access legal representation through the Refugee Legal Service (RLS), a section of the Legal Aid Board. There are services in Dublin, Cork and Galway. The

Irish Refugee Council also provides legal services – see the contacts section on page 83.

What will happen to me if I arrived in Ireland on my own?

If you arrive in Ireland on your own without the care of an adult, you will be dealt with as an unaccompanied minor (also referred to as a separated child). The Child and Family Agency will look into your situation and decide what is best for you. This may involve applying for asylum and you may be placed into the care of the Child and Family Agency.

Who will look after me if I am a separated child?

The Child and Family Agency will take care of your needs. A social worker will talk with you about your needs, and then develop a care plan for you. The social worker may place you with a foster family or in 'supported lodgings' which will prepare you for independent living at 18. See page 41 for more about children in state care.

What will happen if my application for asylum is refused?

You, or your parents on your behalf, may appeal a refusal of refugee status or subsidiary protection to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT). If the RAT decides that the original decision to refuse asylum was wrong, you will be granted refugee status, or subsidiary protection as the case may be.

What are the different steps in the process?

When you or your parents or guardian make an application for refugee status you will also have the option of applying then for subsidiary protection if you wish, although it is not necessary at this time. The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) will first make a decision on refugee status. If the decision is a refusal you will then have the option of appealing that decision to the RAT. If the RAT do not change the decision at this point your application for refugee status will be refused.

Following a refusal of refugee status, if you have not yet made an application for subsidiary protection at this time you will be given three more weeks to do so. If you apply, ORAC will then make a decision on subsidiary protection and if that decision is negative you can also appeal this decision to the RAT.

At any point during this process, if you or your parents or guardian are advised that the proper procedures were not followed or a decision taken contained a legal error, then you can ask the High Court to review them. This is a separate procedure called judicial review. If the High Court agrees with you they will not give you a decision on asylum, instead you will go back to ORAC or the RAT so that the decision can be taken again following the correct procedures.

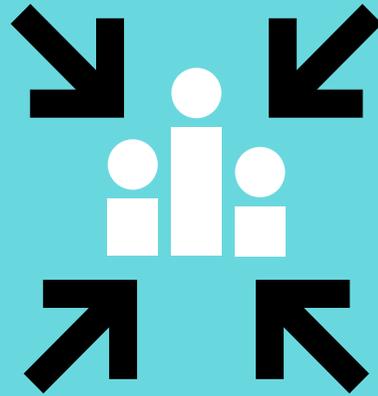
You are entitled to legal advice and a lawyer to represent you regarding these applications and during all of these proceedings.

Can I apply for any other permission if my asylum application is refused?

If your application for asylum has been refused, you may still ask the Minister for Justice and Equality to grant you 'leave to remain' in Ireland based on your particular circumstances. 'Leave to remain' is a special type of permission to live in Ireland and the Minister for Justice and Equality can decide whether to grant it or not.

How do I apply for leave to remain?

Once an application for refugee status is refused, if you choose not to apply for subsidiary protection or you are unsuccessful in your application, then the Minister for Justice and Equality will write to you to tell you there is a possibility that you may receive a deportation order to return you to your country (called a section 3 letter). However, before deportation happens, you may apply for leave to remain or you can choose to return to your country under the Assisted Voluntary Return scheme. In this application, you can tell the Minister why you think you should not be deported. You must make this application within 15 working days from the date the 'section 3 letter' was sent to you.



Can I appeal if I am refused leave to remain?

If your application for leave to remain is refused there is no right of appeal and a deportation order will be made against you. This will require you to leave the State, and if you do not the State may try to remove you. If however you or your parents or guardian are advised that a legal mistake was made in coming to this decision you may still ask the High Court to prevent this from happening, and to have them make the decision again.

6.3 Refugee or subsidiary protection status

If you or your family's application for asylum is successful, you will be granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. This means you can stay in Ireland and you have more rights. The two forms of status have almost the same rights but there are a few small differences.

What are my rights as a refugee?

As a refugee, you will have the same rights in Ireland as an Irish citizen to look for work, get a job, and access education, training, medical care, social protections and services. As a refugee you are entitled to be issued with an Irish travel document, to leave Ireland and to re-enter the country. However, you could lose your refugee status if you return to the country from which you have fled, and you may need visas to enter other countries.

What are my rights if I have subsidiary protection status?

If you or your family's application for subsidiary protection is successful, you will have the same rights and entitlements as a refugee but there are some small differences. In particular it may be more difficult for you to obtain a travel document and you will have to wait five years rather than three before you can apply for citizenship.

What can I do if my family don't live in Ireland but I want them to join me?

If you have been granted asylum and you are unmarried and aged under 18, you can apply for your family to join you in Ireland. This is called 'family reunification'. The Minister for Justice and Equality will allow your parents to join you if they want to, but the Minister does not have to allow your sisters, brothers or other family members to join you.

For information on how to apply for family reunification, see: www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Family_Reunification_Information_Leaflet.

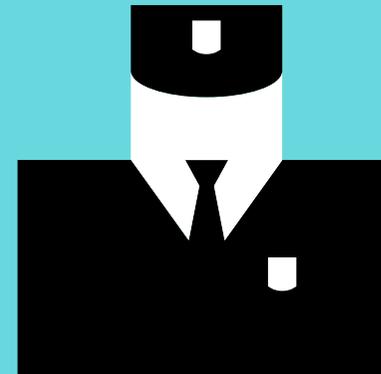
7. MY RIGHTS IN DEALING WITH CRIMINAL LAW AND THE GARDAÍ

7.1 Victim of a crime

What are my rights if I have been the victim of a crime?

As a victim of crime, you have the right to report that crime to the Gardaí (police). However, it is up to the Gardaí and the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to decide whether or not to investigate the crime and bring it to court. If the crime involved violence or a sexual offence and it goes to court, the court must take into account the impact that the crime had on you when deciding the sentence.

There is a Victims Charter and Guide to the Criminal Justice System which tell you about your right to services provided by state agencies to crime victims. You can find these on the website of the Probation Service – www.probation.ie.



Am I entitled to compensation if I have been a victim of crime?

That depends. If a suspected offender is found guilty, the judge may order them to give you financial compensation. If you were injured or died as a result of a crime of violence or while helping someone to prevent a crime or when saving a human life, your parent or guardian can apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal on your behalf. See: www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Criminal_Injuries_Compensation_Scheme.

Who can I talk to if I have been the victim of a crime?

The Crime Victims Helpline is a national helpline offering support to victims of crime. You can contact the helpline by phoning LoCall 1850 211 407 on Mondays from 10am to 7.30pm, Tuesday to Friday from 10am to 5pm and Saturdays between 2pm and 4pm. Or, you can access the helpline online at www.crimevictimshelpline.ie. The National Crime Council has a list of services for victims of crime at www.crimecouncil.gov.ie.

Will I have to speak in court about what happened to me?

As the victim of the crime, you may be asked to appear as a witness to the crime. See below: 'Will I have to go to court if I am a witness to a crime?'

7.2 Witness to a crime Should I tell the Gardaí if I have seen a crime take place?

You should discuss this decision with an adult you trust. It is good practice to report all crimes to the Gardaí. For some serious offences, such as a sexual offence against a child or a vulnerable adult, it is a crime not to tell the Gardaí what you know.

Will I have to go to court if I am a witness to a crime?

You might. It depends on what you saw or heard and whether the State wants you to be a witness in the case. If you are asked to tell the court what you saw, you may be able to do so by a live television link during the trial from a different room so that you don't have to go into the courtroom. You might also be asked to speak privately with the judge, possibly in the company of your parents or guardian.

Will the alleged criminals know it was me who reported them?

The alleged criminals will not necessarily be told who reported the crime. But anyone accused of a crime has a right to hear the evidence against them, and so they will be able to see and hear what you say to the court.

Is there support available to me if I am a witness to a crime?

Yes. There are a number of supports available to you such as:

- the Court Support Service, phone (01) 872 6785, 087 288 552 or visit www.courtsupport.ie;
- Childline, phone 1800 66 66 66;
- the Crime Victims Helpline, LoCall 1850 211 407.

7.3 Suspected or accused of a crime Can I be searched without a warrant or without my consent?

A Garda can search you without your consent, if the Garda has good reason to think you have committed an offence. This applies to everyone under the age of 18, including babies. The Garda does not need the consent of your parent or guardian. The Garda should tell you why you are being searched. Gardaí usually need a search warrant to search a house or other premises. A court, or sometimes a senior Garda, can issue a search warrant.

Can a Garda search my car?

A Garda can search your car if the Garda has good reason to think that:

- you have committed or are about to commit an offence under the Offences Against the State Acts, such as a homicide or other specific offence; or
- you are in possession of a controlled drug such as cannabis or heroin or others specified under the Misuse of Drugs Acts.

A Garda can also search your car under various other powers.

When can a Garda enter my home?

Generally, a Garda cannot enter your home without your consent. However, there are some exceptions. The most common is if the Garda has a valid search warrant or is chasing a suspect.

Does a Garda need a warrant to search my home?

A Garda needs a warrant for most entries and searches of property but not for all. For example, a Garda can enter your home to arrest someone suspected of committing a crime.

Are shop security guards allowed to search me?

In general, a security guard does not have any power to search you without your permission. He or she should hand you over to a Garda to carry out a search. This should be done as soon as possible.

Can the Gardaí arrest me if I am under 18?

The Gardaí have the same powers whether they are dealing with a child, a young person or an adult. But, if you are under 18, the Gardaí must take more account of your age and your level of maturity.

Will the Gardaí tell my parents if I am arrested and brought to a Garda station?

The Garda in charge of the Garda station must tell your parents or guardian that you are in custody, why you are there and that you have the right to a solicitor. This Garda must ask your parents or guardian to come to the station as soon as possible.

Can the Gardaí question me on my own?

No. You have the right to have a solicitor with you during questioning. In addition, if you are under the age of 18, the Gardaí are not allowed to question you or ask you to make a written statement without your parent or guardian present, **except** if:

- they cannot get in touch with your parent or guardian;
- your parent or guardian has been told but has not come to the Garda station in a reasonable time; or
- the Gardaí believe that people or property might be at risk of harm if questioning is delayed.

The Gardaí can also refuse to let your parent or guardian sit in on the interview. They can do this if they believe that your parent or guardian could have been involved in the suspected offence or that their presence might cause an obstruction of justice, for example if your parent might interfere with the interview process. However, if the Gardaí want to question you without one parent or guardian present, they must try and arrange for your other parent, another relative or some other responsible adult to be present at the interview.

Where will I be held in the Garda station?

The Garda in charge of the Garda station must make sure that you are not detained with adults unless there is no other secure accommodation available.

Do I have the right to know the reason for my arrest?

Yes. You have the right to be told in clear, easy-to-understand language that you are under arrest and the reason for your arrest.

Where can I find out more about my rights when dealing with the Gardaí?

See the 'Child and Young Person' section of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties Know Your Rights guide on criminal justice and Garda powers which you can find at www.knowyourrights.ie.

The guide will tell you about your rights when dealing with the Gardaí, and about:

- Garda search powers
- Garda powers of arrest
- Garda public order powers

7.4 Diversion programme

A child suspected of breaking the law is generally referred to the Juvenile Diversion Programme by the Gardaí. If you accept responsibility for breaking the law (also known as 'committing an offence'), and are between the ages of 12 and 18, you can be considered for this programme. You have the right to talk with your parent or guardian and a solicitor before you make this decision.

How does the Juvenile Diversion Programme work?

The Juvenile Diversion Programme aims to prevent young offenders from entering into the full criminal justice system by offering them a second chance.

You, your parents or guardian, your Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO), and possibly another member of the Gardaí and the victim will attend a meeting to discuss and highlight the seriousness of your offence and its effect on the victim(s).

If your offence was minor, you will receive an informal warning (known as a 'caution') from the JLO in your home or at a Garda station. If the offence was more serious, you will receive a formal caution in a Garda station from your JLO or a senior Garda, and possibly also in the presence of the victim. You will have to take steps to make sure you avoid further trouble, such as staying in school and saying sorry to the victim. You may also be supervised by a JLO for up to 12 months.

Will anyone know that I am involved with the programme?

No. Your involvement in the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme is confidential. The only person who will be told is a judge, if you appear in court for committing an offence after being admitted to the programme.

Is the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme the same as a Garda Diversion Project?

No. A Garda Diversion Project is like a youth project run by the Gardaí and other community organisations. It aims to help young people, who have come to the attention of the Gardaí or the Child and Family Agency to avoid situations where they might risk breaking the law. There are over 100 Diversion Projects around the country. See www.iyjs.ie.

7.5 Before the courts as the accused

What is the Children's Court?

This court hears cases involving children and young people under the age of 18. There is a Children's Court building in Dublin. Outside Dublin, the Children's Court is usually held in a District Court building on a different day than the court hearings for adults.

The Children's Court can deal with most criminal cases which involve a young person under 18. It does not deal with serious offences such as manslaughter. Serious offences must be dealt with in the Central Criminal Court. Sometimes a young person charged with a serious offence can choose to go before the judge of the Children's Court or be tried in an adult court by a jury.

What are my rights if my case goes to court?

If you do not go into the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme, you may face prosecution and have to go to court. You will go to the Children's Court or, if you have committed a more serious crime, you will go either to the Circuit Court or the Central Criminal Court. You have the right to have your parent or guardian present for the hearing.

Will my case be heard differently from an adult case?

Yes. In the Children's Court, your hearing will be at a different time, on a different day or in a different courtroom than regular adult court hearings. That means you won't be in the same place as adults who are facing criminal charges. The judge should also run the trial in such a way that you understand what is happening.

Will my identity be made public?

It depends on which court you attend. In general, if you are under 18, the court will sit in private with only court staff, solicitors, your parents or guardians, and the Gardaí present. Your name should not appear in the media or online. If someone tells your identity to the public, they can be fined or sent to prison.

Will a solicitor (a type of lawyer) represent me in court?

Yes. The type of solicitor will depend on the nature of the charges against you, and your family's ability to pay for one. If your family cannot afford a solicitor, you will qualify for legal aid (a free lawyer). Before you are appointed a solicitor, the Director of Public Prosecutions must decide if you will go before the Children's Court or the Central Criminal Court for a jury trial.

What should I expect in court?

The courtroom is a formal place and you are expected to behave in a serious way. Ask your solicitor before your hearing to explain what the courtroom looks like, who will be attending your hearing, and where everyone will sit. If you don't understand what is happening during the hearing, ask your solicitor to explain the hearing to you.

What could happen when my case comes before the court?

One of three things could happen.

- The judge may hear your case.
- The judge may adjourn your case – this means that the case will be heard on another day. If this happens, the judge might decide to:
 - remand you in custody (send you to detention until your case is heard – this will only happen if the charge is very serious or if you are continually breaking the law); or
 - grant you bail – this means that your parent or guardian will have to pay money or promise to pay money to keep you out of detention. If the judge grants you bail, it will probably include strict conditions such as staying away from certain people or places, not drinking alcohol or taking illegal drugs, and going to school. If you break these conditions you may be placed in detention.
- 'strike out' your charge – this means that nothing further will happen in your case.

If the judge decides to hear your case, the judge may:

- put off making a decision on the charge and send you to the Young Persons' Probation Service for a family conference; or
- order a probation report – this means that a probation officer will be asked to examine your case and your personal circumstances; or
- convict you of the charge and sentence you.

What happens if the judge sends me for a family conference?

A family conference is a meeting between you, your family and a probation and welfare officer to work out a plan for you to follow instead of you being convicted and sentenced. Following the plan will help you to stop offending.

Your solicitor will tell you about what will happen at the conference and in court. They will also tell you how you should behave. You should always ask your solicitor if you are unsure about what is happening in court or what will happen afterwards.

What happens if I am found guilty of an offence and convicted?

The judge will sentence you to a punishment. The punishment will depend on the crime you committed and how serious it was, and on your personal circumstances, as assessed by a probation officer. Punishment can include:

- paying a fine;
- probation;
- detention (if the offence is very serious).

Probation and detention are explained in the next sections.

7.6 Probation

What is probation?

Probation is a formal warning that the judge may give you instead of sending you to detention. The court may order you to stop committing the offending behaviour and may set down certain conditions for your behaviour for a specific length of time. You will be assigned a probation officer whose job is to make sure that you follow the conditions in the court order.

What happens if I don't follow my probation conditions?

You can be brought back before the court for punishment and possible detention.

Are my rights affected if I am put on probation?

Your rights will only be affected in that you may have to complete an education or training course, stay under close supervision by the probation officer and remain living in a specific place until the probation period is over.

Is there a special service for young people on probation?

The Young Persons' Probation (YPP) Service is a special division of the Probation Service which works with young people aged 12 to 18 who come before the courts. The YPP promotes the use of community-based sanctions and restorative justice to reduce re-offending.

7.7 Detention

Can I be sent to prison?

This depends on your age and gender. Most young people sentenced to detention will go to a Children Detention School such as Oberstown or Trinity House in Dublin. Children Detention Schools provide education and training, but they are secure facilities which means they are locked and you are not free to come and go.

However, if you are male and aged 17, you may be sent to a young person's unit in an adult prison while the building of a new facility at Oberstown for people your age is ongoing.

What are my rights while I am in detention?

You have a right to have your health, safety and welfare looked after. You must be treated with respect and be protected from discrimination and harm, including bullying. You are entitled to see your family and continue your education.

Can I make a complaint about my treatment in detention?

Yes. If you have a complaint about the way you are being treated in detention, you should complain to the person in charge using the Irish Youth Justice Service's complaints system. You can find out more about this at www.iyjs.ie.

If you are not happy with the response to your complaint, you can appeal to the Director of the Children Detention School. If you are not happy with the outcome (result) of the appeal, you can complain to the Ombudsman for Children.

Do I have a right to support when I leave detention?

No. There are no formal supports available for those leaving detention although community groups might help you find a job, training placement or somewhere to live (if you do not go home). If you are under 16, your social worker should work with the staff in the Detention School and your family to put a plan in place for you to leave detention and return home, or an aftercare plan if you are 16 or over.

If you are under 18, the Child and Family Agency, Tusla, must support you if you cannot return home.

Do I have to tell people that I have a conviction?

This depends. You may have to tell people about your conviction when you are applying for a job or a visa to visit another country. But if your offence was not serious, you can have your conviction removed from your record if you do not offend for three years after you turn 18. If this happens, you don't have to tell anybody about the offence.

Some convictions cannot be removed from your record, for instance if you were convicted in the Central Criminal Court or if your offence came under the Sex Offenders Act 2001.

8. WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?

There are a number of organisations and bodies that are mentioned in this guide. They are grouped together by theme and listed here in alphabetical order along with a short description of what they do and how they can help you. You can complain to some of the organisations and bodies directly, but with others you may have to get your parent or guardian or a trusted adult to find out information for you or to make a complaint on your behalf.

COMPLAINT AND REDRESS BODIES

If you wish to make a complaint, you should first raise the issue with the organisation or person that you feel has breached your rights to give them a chance to fix the problem. You can do this informally or use their complaints form if they have one. If you are dissatisfied with the response or you feel that the matter has not been resolved, one of the following bodies may be able to help you.

Data Protection Commissioner

The Data Protection Commissioner investigates complaints by individuals who feel their right to privacy has not been adequately protected or their personal details have been wrongly used.

If you give any personal details or information to an organisation or individual, that organisation or person has a responsibility to respect your right to privacy by keeping your information safe and private.

The Commissioner's website has a plain English guide on your rights under data protection law, as well as a chart for young people outlining their data protection rights and responsibilities.

Canal House, Station Road
Portarlington, Co Laois
Tel: 057 868 4800
LoCall: 1890 25 22 31
Email: info@dataprotection.ie
www.dataprotection.ie

Equality Tribunal

The Equality Tribunal is an independent body you can make a complaint to if you have been discriminated against by an organisation or an individual when trying to access goods or services.

The Tribunal will try to help you to come to an arrangement with the person or organisation through mediation – a process to give you and the person or organisation you are complaining about a chance to work towards a satisfactory solution.

If this is not successful, then the case may be heard by a Tribunal Equality Officer.

3 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 477 4100
LoCall: 1890 34 44 24
Email: info@equalitytribunal.ie
www.equalitytribunal.ie

*At print time, plans were underway to incorporate the Equality Tribunal into the new Workplace Relations Service, part of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. See www.workplacerelations.ie

Garda Síochána Ombudsman

You can make a complaint to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman (GSO) about the behaviour of a Garda if:

- 1) it has affected you directly,
- 2) you were a witness to the behaviour, or
- 3) you want to do so on behalf of someone else and you have his or her permission.

You must complain within six months of the incident taking place, unless you have a good reason for the delay. Your parent or guardian can also make a complaint on your behalf. The GSO will decide if they can consider your complaint (if it is 'admissible'). If it is admissible, the Ombudsman may refer the complaint for mediation, or the Garda Commissioner may investigate your complaint.

If the complaint is upheld, disciplinary measures may be taken against the Garda in question or it may, if more serious, be referred on for criminal prosecution.

150 Upper Abbey Street, Dublin 1
Local: 1890 600 800
Email: info@gsoc.ie
www.gardaombudsman.ie

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) works to protect and promote human rights, and to make sure that discrimination does not occur in relation to any of the nine areas outlined in equality legislation: gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief or membership of the Traveller community.

You can complain to IHREC if you feel that you have been discriminated against. IHREC can provide you with information on equality law. It may provide legal assistance if you have been unlawfully discriminated against in accessing a service in school or employment settings and so on. However, you cannot make a complaint of discrimination based on your age.

You can also ask IHREC to carry out an enquiry or to give you legal advice or assistance to take a case if you feel that your human rights have been breached or ignored. However, it will only consider your request for an enquiry or take a legal case where there is no other more appropriate body to deal with your complaint.

16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 858 9601
LoCall: 1890 245545
Email: info@ihrec.ie
www.ihrec.ie

Office of the Information Commissioner

If you are under 18 and your parents have applied for any of your records from a public body under Freedom of Information legislation and have been refused, then you may appeal this decision to the Information Commissioner.

You must have asked the public body to review its original decision before you can ask for a review by the Information Commissioner. The review is free if it relates to personal records.

18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 639 5689
LoCall: 1890 253238
Email: info@oic.gov.ie
www.oic.gov.ie

Office of the Ombudsman for Children (OCO)

This office advises the Government on young people and children's matters. It also handles complaints. If you are under 18 and have been negatively affected by a decision made by a State or public body, you can complain to the OCO.

The Ombudsman looks at complaints against a wide range of bodies including government departments, certain schools, hospitals, public bodies or organisations providing services on behalf of the State. You can complain directly if you are under 18 or your parents can make a complaint on your behalf.

The OCO operates a dedicated website www.itsyourright.ie to raise awareness of the rights of children and young people under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also available as an app.

Millennium House
52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 865 6800
Freefone: 1800 20 20 40
Email: oco@oco.ie
www.oco.ie, www.itsyourright.ie

National Consumer Agency

If you think a business has breached your consumer rights, you can report the business to the National Consumer Agency. This agency can also provide you with information on consumer rights, how to manage your money and product safety.

4 Harcourt Road, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 402 5555
LoCall Helpline: 1890 432 432
www.consumerhelp.ie

Workplace Relations

If you are under 18 and in employment, and you feel that your employer has not respected your employment rights, then your parent or guardian may make a complaint on your behalf to Workplace Relations.

The Workplace Relations Customer Services (WRCS) is part of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. The WRCS can deal with all employment and workplace enquiries. It can also refer complaints to the appropriate authorities.

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
Kildare Street, Dublin 2
LoCall: 1890 80 80 90
www.workplacerelations.ie

LEGAL BODIES

You can seek legal advice from a solicitor if you have a legal query, need legal guidance or representation in legal proceedings, or help with legal documents. You might need to get legal assistance for matters such as divorce, separation and custody; employment law; immigration status; contract law or for any other legal matter.

You have a right to a lawyer if you are brought to court by the Gardaí. If you cannot afford a lawyer, the judge will provide a lawyer for you free of charge. If you need a lawyer for some other reason, another adult such as your parent or guardian can make contact with one on your behalf. Below are some useful contact details.

Bar Council of Ireland

This is the representative and regulatory body for barristers. If you are looking for a barrister or have a complaint about your barrister, you can contact the Bar Council.

Bar Council Administration Office
Four Courts, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 817 5000
Email: barcouncil@lawlibrary.ie
www.lawlibrary.ie

Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)

This non-governmental organisation works towards achieving access to justice. The organisation works across a range of issues and provides some basic, free legal services to the public.

13 Lower Dorset Street, Dublin 1
Information and Referral Line: 1890 350 250
Tel: 01 874 5690
www.flac.ie

The Law Society of Ireland

This is the representative and regulatory body for solicitors. If you are looking for a solicitor or have a complaint about your solicitor, you can contact the Law Society.

Blackhall Place, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 672 4800
Email: general@lawsociety.ie
www.lawsociety.ie

Legal Aid Board

The Legal Aid Board is responsible for legal aid if you can't afford to pay for legal assistance. It provides legal aid in relation to civil matters – for example, personal injuries or applications for asylum. It does not deal with criminal issues.

Head Office
Quay Street, Cahirciveen
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 947 1000

Dublin Office, 47 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 644 1900

LoCall: 1890 615 200
Email: info@legalaidboard.ie
www.legalaidboard.ie

INFORMATION ON PUBLIC SERVICES

Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board is a public information service that provides detailed information about your rights to healthcare, housing, social welfare and education.

The Board provides information through a network of over 250 Citizens Information Centres (CICs) around the country and through their website. CICs can provide you with information or direct you to another appropriate body or mechanism which may be able to help you. You should call the helpline or visit their website to find the closest centre to you.

Tel: 0761 07 4000
www.citizensinformation.ie

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Child and Family Agency (Tusla)

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) is the State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes (results) for children.

The Tusla website contains information on child protection services, childcare, welfare, education, psychological services, and services that deal with different kinds of violence. It also helps you to contact a social worker in your area.

Block D, Park Gate Business Centre
Parkgate Street, Dublin 8
Tel: 01 635 2854
Email: info@tusla.ie
www.tusla.ie

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

This government department is responsible for policies and services for children and young people in Ireland. It also responsible for the Child and Family Agency, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

43-49 Mespil Rd, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 647 3000
www.dcy.gov.ie

Department of Education and Skills

This is the government department responsible for education and training.

Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 889 6400

Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Tel: 090 648 3600

Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Tel: 057 932 4300
www.education.ie

Department of Social Protection

This is the government department that provides income supports, benefits, employment services, and advice to members of the public.

The department's website contains information about available benefits and supports, and how to access them. It also has information on the location of your nearest Social Protection office.

www.welfare.ie

CHILDREN'S ORGANISATIONS

Barnardos

Barnardos is an independent charity that works directly with children and families in need, providing services and support in 40 centres around the country. It also campaigns for children's rights in Ireland and provides training and resources to childcare professionals.

Christchurch Square, Dublin 8
Tel: 01 453 0355
Callsave: 1850 222 300

www.barnardos.ie

Children's Rights Alliance

The Children's Rights Alliance unites over 100 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children by making sure that their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services.

7 Red Cow Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 662 9400
Email: info@childrensrightrights.ie
www.childrensrightrights.ie

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)

The ISPCC is a children's charity which advocates on behalf of all children in Ireland. It provides a range of independent services which are preventative and empowering in nature.

29 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 676 7960
Email: ispcc@ispcc.ie
www.ispcc.ie

Law Centre for Children and Young People

This non-governmental organisation works towards improving access to justice for children and young people. It provides free specialist legal information to children and young people about their rights.

Room 23, Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 874 9108
Email: info@lawcentreforchildren.ie
www.lawcentreforchildren.ie

YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils operating in every local authority in Ireland. They give young people a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them in their local area. You can find your nearest Comhairle na nÓg on their website.

Administrator direct line: 01 858 4520
Email: citizenparticipation@dcya.gov.ie
www.comhairlenanog.ie

Foróige

Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation, is a leading youth organisation working with 56,000 young people aged 10-18 each year through volunteer-led clubs and staff-led youth projects. There are 588 Foróige Clubs, 134 youth projects, mentoring programmes and citizenship and leadership programmes in Ireland. Find your nearest Foróige club on their website.

Block 12D, Joyce Way, Park West
Dublin 12
Tel: 01 630 1560
Email: info@foroige.ie
www.foroige.ie

National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

The National Youth Council of Ireland is the representative body for around 50 voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. It uses these organisations' experience to act on issues that affect young people.

3 Montague Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 478 4122
Email: info@nyci.ie
www.nyci.ie

SpunOut

SpunOut is a website created by young people for young people. It promotes general wellbeing and healthy living. The website provides easy access to relevant, reliable, and non-judgmental advice to help young people between the ages of 16 and 25 to make sound life decisions.

48 Fleet Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 675 3554
Email: info@spunout.ie
www.spunout.ie

Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland is a federation of 22 Local Member Youth Services and a national office. Youth Work Ireland combines and operates an Integrated Youth Services Model which delivers a range of targeted projects, services, youth clubs and programmes to young people.

20 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 8584500
Email: info@youthworkireland.ie
www.youthworkireland.ie

LGBT YOUNG PEOPLE

BeLonG To

BeLonG To is a national youth service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland. It provides direct services to LGBT young people in Dublin and supports LGBT youth groups around the country.

Parliament House
13 Parliament Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 670 6223
www.belongto.org

Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)

This non-governmental organisation campaigns for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in marriage, at home, at school, at work and in the wider community.

2 Exchange Street Upper, Dublin 8
Tel: 01 672 8650
Email: info@glen.ie
www.glen.ie

TRAVELLER YOUNG PEOPLE

Irish Traveller Movement

The Irish Traveller Movement is a national network of groups and individuals that work within the Traveller community. Its regional networks aim to increase Traveller participation and provide support to Travellers at local level. Its National Working Groups address policy issues concerning Travellers, including those affecting young Travellers.

4-5 Eustace Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 679 6577
Email: itm@itmtrav.com
www.itmtrav.com

Pavee Point

Pavee Point aims to improve the living circumstances and quality of life of Irish Travellers.

46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 878 0255
Email: info@pavee.ie
www.paveepoint.ie

HOTLINES

Childline

Childline is provided by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) to help and support children and young people. You can contact Childline in different ways:

- 24 Hour Hotline: 1800 666666
- Text 'Talk' to 50101 and receive a call back
- Leave a public or a private message on the Childline website www.childline.ie

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre National Helpline

This is a free, confidential, listening and support service for people who have been raped, sexually assaulted, sexually harassed or sexually abused at any time in their lives. It is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Tel: 1800 77 8888
Email: counselling@rcc.ie

Samaritans

Samaritans provide a telephone service that operates day and night if you are in distress. Volunteers help you talk through whatever is troubling you, find the answers that are right for you, and offer support. The service is free and confidential, and you don't have to give your real name or any personal information if you don't want to.

4-5 Usher's Court
Usher's Quay, Dublin 8
Free 24 Hour line: 116 123
www.samaritans.org

Teenline Ireland

Teenline Ireland is a confidential and free phone service open every day of the week from 8 pm to 11 pm and on Wednesdays from 4 pm to 11 pm, for young people who need someone to talk to.

Tel: 1800 833 634

Women's Aid Helpline

This freephone helpline offers confidential information, support and understanding to women in the Republic of Ireland, who are being physically, emotionally, financially and sexually abused by their boyfriends, husbands and partners.

Open 7 days a week from 10 am to 10 pm (except Christmas Day): 1800 341 900

ON THE WEB

Irish Internet Hotline

The Irish Internet Hotline provides you with a way to securely and confidentially report child pornography and other forms of illegal online content and activity. You can make a report by email, post, telephone or by using an app (available on their website).

Unit 25 Sandyford Office Park

Blackthorn Avenue, Dublin 18

Tel: 1890 610 710

Email: info@hotline.ie

www.hotline.ie

Think Before You Click

Think Before You Click is a set of class plans, information resources, advice flyers and action project materials for young people and their teachers who wish to explore the issue of online privacy in the context of online rights and responsibilities.

www.thinkb4click.ie

Watch Your Space

Watch Your Space is an awareness raising initiative of Webwise. It promotes safe, effective use of the internet among young people through awareness raising, resources and campaigns.

The Watch Your Space website contains useful resources, advice and campaign materials on issues such as online bullying and safe internet use.

www.watchyourspace.ie

Webwise

Webwise is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre. Webwise works with the Office for Internet Safety to develop national initiatives and education programmes promoting the safer use of the internet by children and vulnerable people.

Dublin City University, Dublin 9

Email: internetsafety@pdst.ie

www.webwise.ie

HEALTH

B4Udecide

Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, B4Udecide is a website that provides non-judgmental information to young people and their parents, carers and teachers about relationships and sex.

www.b4udecide.ie

Bodywhys

Bodywhys, the Eating Disorder Association of Ireland, is the national voluntary organisation and support service for people affected by eating disorders. It also campaigns for the provision of better treatment services.

PO Box 105, Blackrock, Co Dublin

Tel: 01 283 4963

Helpline: 1890 200 444

Email: info@bodywhys.ie

www.bodywhys.ie

CARI

CARI is the leading voluntary organisation that provides child-centered specialised therapy and support to children and families groups by child sexual abuse.

110 Lower Drumcondra Rd, Dublin 9

Tel: 01 830 8529

Email: info@cari.ie

www.cari.ie

Children in Hospital Ireland

Children in Hospital Ireland is a voluntary organisation committed to promoting and ensuring the welfare of all children in hospital and their families.

Carmichael Centre, Coleraine House

Coleraine Street, Dublin 7

LoCall: 1890 25 26 82

Email: info@childreninhospital.ie

www.yoobyoo.ie

Drugs.ie – Drug and Alcohol Information and Support

Drugs.ie is an independent website managed by The Ana Liffey Drug Project. The website aims to help individuals, families and communities prevent and / or deal with problems related to drug and alcohol use. It provides information on support, training, counselling, rehabilitation and treatment.

48 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin 1

HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline: 1800 459 459

Email: info@drugs.ie

www.drugs.ie

HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme

The Health Service Executive (HSE) Crisis Pregnancy Programme develops and implements a national strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland. Its website contains a range of information, resources and support on crisis pregnancy and sex education.

4th Floor, 89 – 94 Capel Street

Dublin 1

Tel: 01 814 6292

Email: info@crisispregnancy.ie

www.crisispregnancy.ie

HSE National Information Line

The HSE provides all of Ireland's public health and personal social services, in hospitals and communities across the country. Ring this number for help finding the service you need.

LoCall: 1850 24 1850

www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/LHO/

Positive Options

The Positive Options campaign aims to encourage women, their partners and families experiencing crisis pregnancy to talk to a non-judgemental counsellor for free. It provides information on state-funded crisis pregnancy counselling services at over 50 centres nationwide.

Freetext LIST to 50444 for a list of free State-funded crisis pregnancy counselling services.

www.positiveoptions.ie

MENTAL HEALTH

Headstrong / Jigsaw

Headstrong is a charity that supports young people's mental health in Ireland. Its 'Jigsaw' services provide a safe place where young people ages 12-25 can get one-to-one support that is free and confidential. There are Jigsaw projects in 10 locations around Ireland.

16 Westland Square, Pearse Street, Dublin 2

Tel: 01 472 7010

Email: info@headstrong.ie

www.headstrong.ie

Let Someone Know

A website that provides information on mental health, and on how to seek help.

www.letsomeoneknow.ie

MyMind

MyMind provides mental wellbeing services in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.

1 Chelmsford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Tel: 01 4433964

Email: info@mymind.org

www.mymind.org

National Office for Suicide Prevention

This HSE department is responsible for the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention. It also co-ordinates suicide prevention efforts around the country.

Stewart's Hospital, Mill Lane
Palmerstown Dublin 20
Tel: 01 620 1672
Email: info@nospi.ie

www.nosp.ie

Rape Crisis Network Ireland

Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) is a specialist information and resource centre on rape and all forms of sexual violence. They are the representative, umbrella body for Rape Crisis Centres who provide free advice, counselling and support for survivors of sexual abuse.

The Halls, Quay Street, Galway
Tel: 091 563676
Email: admin@rcni.ie
www.rcni.ie

Reachout

An independent website that aims to tell young people about the types of help and support services available in relation to mental health.

Tel: 01 764 5666
Email: info@inspireireland.ie
ie.reachout.com

St Patrick's Mental Health Services Support and Information Service

This is a telephone and email service run by experienced mental health nurses. It also has an answering and call-back facility outside of business hours. It provides advice and support if you are worried about any aspect of your own mental health or that of a friend or family member.

Helpline (9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday):
01 249 3333
Email: info@stpatmail.com

Online form: <http://www.stpatricks.ie/support-information-service>

DISABILITY

Disability Federation of Ireland

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is a national support organisation for over 130 voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities. The DFI provides a range of services, including information, training, research and advocacy.

Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8
Tel: 01 454 7978
Email: info@disability-federation.ie
www.disability-federation.ie

Enable Ireland

Enable Ireland provides free services to children and adults with disabilities and their families from 40 locations in 14 counties.

32F Rosemount Park Drive, Rosemount
Business Park, Ballycoolin Road, Dublin 11
Tel: 01 872 7155
Email: communications@enableireland.ie
www.enableireland.ie

HSE Disability Services

The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides a range of services for people with intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities or autism.

These services include basic health services as well as assessment, rehabilitation, income maintenance, community care and residential care. Some services are provided directly by the HSE.

Information on disability services in your county is available on the HSE website – just search for 'disability services'.

www.hse.ie

Inclusion Ireland

Inclusion Ireland represents over 160 organisations and campaigns for changes in services and legislation that will improve the quality of life and participation of people with an intellectual disability in Irish society.

Unit C2, The Steelworks, Foley Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 855 9891
Email: info@inclusionireland.ie
www.inclusionireland.ie

National Disability Authority

The National Disability Authority is the independent state body that provides expert advice on disability policy and practice to the Government.

25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 608 0400
Email: nda@nda.ie
www.nda.ie

Office of the Disability Appeals Officer

The Disability Appeals Officer is an independent officer appointed by the Minister for Health. The Officer provides an appeals service to people who are not satisfied with the outcome of appeals against HSE disability needs assessments.

Freeport, 3rd Floor Hawkins House
Hawkins Street, Dublin 2
LoCall: 1850 211583
Email: appeal@odao.ie
www.odao.ie

Special Needs Parents Association

The Special Needs Parents Association exists to support all parents with special needs by promoting improved treatment, education, welfare and acceptance. It also runs local support groups.

2nd Floor, 13 Upper Baggot Street, Dublin 4
Tel: 087 774 41917
Email: lorraine@specialneedsparents.ie
www.specialneedsparents.ie

EDUCATION

Child and Family Agency – Preschool Inspection Services

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) inspects pre-schools, play groups, nurseries, crèches, day-care and similar services which cater for children aged 0-6.

www.tusla.ie/services

Department of Education and Skills, Special Needs and Tuition Grants Section

This is the financial payment section of this Department. It processes various grants to primary schools.

Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co Westmeath
Tel: 090 648 3750/ 3872/ 3853/ 4239
Email: sntg@education.gov.ie
www.education.ie

Irish Second-Level Students' Union

This is the national body for school Student Councils. It aims to represent and connect Irish second-level students around Ireland. It also aims to make the voice of Irish second-level students heard within the education system.

9th Floor, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 443 4461
Email: info@issu.ie
www.issu.ie

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

This is a body that conducts research and advises the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment from early childhood to the end of second-level education. It works with learners, teachers, practitioners, parents and others to support innovation in schools and other educational settings.

35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 661 7177
Email: info@ncca.ie
www.ncca.ie
www.curriculumonline.ie

National Council for Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent statutory body working to improve the delivery of education services to people with special educational needs.

It has a national network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who work with parents, schools and the HSE to provide resources to support children with special educational needs. You can find out about their services in your locality by calling them at the below number.

1-2 Mill St, Trim
Co Meath
Tel: 046 948 6432
www.ncse.ie

National Parents Council Primary

National Parents Council Primary (NPC) represents parents of children in primary and early education. It works for the rights of children and promotes partnership between home and school. It raises issues of concern about the primary education system.

12 Marlborough Court
Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 887 4034
Helpline: 01 887 4477
Email: info@npc.ie
www.npcp.ie

National Parents Council Post-Primary

The National Parents Council Post-Primary represents the parents of students in post-primary education. It promotes issues of concern to parents and works with the post-primary formal education sector to develop policies.

Unit 5, Glasnevin Business Centre
Ballyboggan Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 11
Tel: 01 830 2740 / 01 830 2747
LoCall: 1890 672770
Email: npcpp@eircom.ie
www.npcpp.ie

State Examinations Commission

This Commission is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate exams. It operates under the Department of Education and Skills. Its website contains a range of useful information on these exams, including sample papers, exam timetables and marking schemes.

Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co Westmeath
Tel: 090 644 2700
www.examinations.ie

CHILDREN IN CARE

EPIC (Empowering People in Care)

EPIC is an independent association that works with and for children and young people in Ireland who are living in care or who have had an experience of living in care. This includes those in residential care, foster care, hostel, high support and special care. EPIC also works with young people preparing to leave care and in aftercare.

7 Red Cow Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 872 7661
Text: 087 903 6598
Email: info@epiconline.ie
www.epiconline.ie

HOMELESSNESS

Focus Ireland

Focus Ireland works with people who are homeless or are at risk of losing their homes. It offers advice, support, education and housing to help people to have and keep a home. Focus Ireland has offices in Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, Kilkenny, Cork and Sligo.

For a full list of their offices, and to make contact, visit the Focus Ireland website.

9 - 12 High Street
Christchurch
Dublin 8
Tel: 01 881 5900
www.focusireland.ie

Out of Hours Crisis Services

The Crisis Intervention Service provides an 'out-of-hours' emergency social work service to children under 18 years who are in crisis outside normal working hours where regular services may not be available. The service operates across the greater Dublin area.

If you live outside of the Dublin area, Tusla operates an Emergency Place of Safety Service for children found to be at risk out-of-hours.

To access these services you must contact your local Garda station. See also www.dcy.gov.ie

Peter McVerry Trust

Peter McVerry Trust offers a range of services to address homelessness. Services include drop-in centres in the Dublin area for young homeless people, drug treatment, temporary accommodation and housing.

29 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 823 0776
Email: info@pmvtrust.ie
www.pmvtrust.ie

Simon Communities in Ireland

The Simon Communities work throughout Ireland to provide care, accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness and those at risk. To find the nearest Simon office to you, please go their website.

National Office: St. Andrews House
28/30 Exchequer St, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 671 1606
Email: info@simoncommunity.com
www.simon.ie

FAMILY MATTERS AND SUPPORT

Adoption Authority of Ireland

The Adoption Authority of Ireland is an independent statutory body appointed by Government which regulates adoption in Ireland.

Shelbourne House, Shelbourne Road, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 230 9300
Email: corporate@aai.gov.ie
www.aai.gov.ie

Barnardos Post Adoption Services

This service is an independent and confidential service to adopted people, birth parents and adoptive parents. It provides support and advice to parents who have adopted from abroad, as well as a direct service to children. It also offers individual support to birth mothers and adopted people who are considering contact with birth relatives.

23/24 Buckingham Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 813 4100
Helpline: 01 454 6388
Email: adoption@barnardos.ie
www.barnardos.ie/adoption

General Register Office

The Office is where records of births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships and adoptions are kept. You can register the birth of a child and get a birth certificate through this office.

Government Offices
Convent Road, Roscommon

Tel: 090 663 2900
LoCall: 1890 252076
Email: gro@groireland.ie
www.certificates.ie
www.groireland.ie

Teen Between

Teen Between is a counselling service. It is designed to help teenagers cope with their parents' separation or divorce. It is delivered in various locations around the country.

38 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 1800 303 191
Email: teenbetween@relationshipsireland.com
Find a Teen Between service near you at www.teenbetween.ie

IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

Teen Parents Support Programme

Run by Treoir, the Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) is a support service for young mothers, young fathers and their families from pregnancy until the baby is 2 years of age.

The TPSP offers support and information in all areas of a young parent's life including health, relationships, parenting, child care, social welfare entitlements, education, training and anything else about which the mother or father is concerned.

14 Gandon House, Custom House
Square IFSC, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 670 0167
Email: tpsp@treoir.ie
www.tpsp.ie

Treoir

Treoir is a free, confidential, information service for unmarried parents, living together or apart, as well as for their extended families and those working with them. It provides information provision, an advice helpline and workshops.

14 Gandon House, IFSC, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 6700 120
LoCall: 1890 252 084
E-mail: info@treoir.ie
www.treoir.ie

Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland (YAP)

YAP provides support programmes for young people and families in Ireland. Young people and their families work with an advocate (a specially trained person to help improve links between you, your family and your community) for six months.

3rd Floor Park House, 191-193a
North Circular Road, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 868 9180
Email: info@yapireland.ie
www.yapireland.ie

Parentline

Parentline provides a telephone helpline, parent support groups and a face-to-face appointment service to parents who are experiencing difficulties.

Carmichael House,
North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 878 7230
Helpline: (01) 873 3500
Email: info@parentline.ie
www.parentline.ie

Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB)

This section of the Garda Síochána deals with immigration issues. It registers non-national residents of Ireland and issues GNIB identification cards.

It also conducts border control checks and investigates illegal immigration and human trafficking.

13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 666 9130/ 666 9101
Email: gnib_dv@garda.ie
www.garda.ie

Immigrant Council of Ireland

This non-governmental organisation promotes the rights of migrants through information, legal advice, advocacy, lobbying, research and training. The Council is also an independent law centre.

2 St Andrew Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 674 0200
Email: admin@immigrantcouncil.ie
www.immigrantcouncil.ie

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)

This is a 'one stop shop' for matters relating to asylum, immigration, citizenship and visas.

13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 616 7700
LoCall: 1890 551 500
www.inis.gov.ie

Irish Refugee Council

This non-governmental organisation advocates on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. It runs a Drop-In Centre for those who need help or guidance about the asylum process. It also runs a Law Centre.

37 Dame Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
Tel: 01 764 5854
Email: info@irishrefugeecouncil.ie
www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

Law Centre:

Tel: 01 764 5061
Email: lawcentre@irishrefugeecouncil.ie

Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC)

This office investigates applications from people seeking refugee status, family reunification and subsidiary protection.

Public Office hours: 8.45 am to 4 pm Mon - Fri

79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 602 8000
Email: oracmail@orac.ie
www.orac.ie

Refugee Appeals Tribunal

The Refugee Appeals Tribunal decides appeals of asylum seekers whose application for refugee status or subsidiary protection have been refused by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner.

6/7 Hanover Street East, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 474 8400
Email: info@refappeal.ie
www.refappeal.ie

Refugee Legal Services

These services provide confidential and independent legal services to people applying for asylum, and on immigration and deportation matters. The services are part of the Legal Aid Board.

Dublin: 48/49 North Brunswick Street
George's Lane, Dublin 7
Freephone: 1800 23 83 43
Tel: 01 646 9600
Email: dublinrls@legalaiddboard.ie

Cork: North Quay House, Popes Quay, Cork
Freephone: 1800 202420
Tel: 021 455 4634
Email: rlscork@legalaiddboard.ie

Galway: Seville House,
New Dock Street, Galway
Freephone: 1800 502400
Tel: 091 562480
Email: rlsgalway@legalaiddboard.ie

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNCHR, the UN's refugee agency, is an international organisation responsible for protecting the rights of refugees and stateless people. In Ireland it doesn't have a direct role in the asylum application process but the protection unit sometimes assists individuals where asylum seekers, refugees and stateless people are in need of assistance, support or advice. Such assistance is not intended to replace legal advice or interfere with the relationship between an asylum seeker and their legal adviser.

102 Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 631 4510
Email: iredu@unhcr.org
www.unhcr.ie

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

An Garda Síochána

The Irish police service.

Garda HQ: Phoenix Park, Dublin 8

Tel: 01 666 0000

Garda Confidential Helpline: 1800 666 111

Emergencies: 999

www.garda.ie

(For complaints about the Gardaí see the Garda Síochána Ombudsman above at page 70)

Courts Service

The Courts Service manages the courts in Ireland. It provides information on the courts system to the public.

15 - 24 Phoenix Street North

Smithfield, Dublin 7

Tel: 01 888 6000

www.courts.ie

Crime Victims' Helpline

The Crime Victims Helpline supports and helps victims of crime and all those affected by crime. It provides information about the criminal justice system and referrals to other resources that may help.

Opening hours:

Monday - 10 am to 7.30 pm

Tuesday to Friday - 10 am to 5 pm

Saturday and Bank Holidays - 2 pm to 4 pm

Sunday - Closed

Outside of these hours you can leave a message and your call will be returned.

Freephone: 116 006

Email: info@crimevictimshelpline.ie

Text: 085 133 7711

www.crimevictimshelpline.ie

Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)

The DPP is in charge of prosecutions on behalf of the State and the people of Ireland.

14-16 Merrion Street, Dublin 2

Tel: 01 678 9222

www.dpp.ie

Irish Youth Justice Service

The Irish Youth Justice Service is responsible for improving the youth justice system.

The service has staff from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Justice and Equality.

4th Floor 43 - 49 Mespil Rd, Dublin 4

Tel: 01 647 3000

Email: iyjs@justice.ie

www.iyjs.ie

Young Persons' Probation Service (YPP)

The YPP is a special part of the Probation Service. It works with children and young people aged 12-18 years who come before the Courts or who are in a Children Detention School. The YPP promotes the use of community-based sanctions and restorative justice to reduce re-offending. There are 17 community-based organisations which deliver services on behalf of the YPP. It works closely with the Irish Youth Justice Service.

Haymarket, Smithfield, Dublin 7

Tel: 01 817 3600

www.probation.ie

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

The Rights of Children and Young People

Know Your Rights is a public information project of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), designed to inform people in clear and accessible language about their rights under various key areas of the law in Ireland. This is the sixth guide in the Know Your Rights series, and was produced in partnership with the Children's Rights Alliance. This, and other guides in the Know Your Rights series, are also available for print and download free of charge on our webpage, www.knowyourrights.ie.

The guide is also accessible on the Children's Rights Alliance website, www.childrensrights.ie.

This guide provides information in plain language about your rights as a child or young person in Ireland.

The content of the guide is aimed at young people. However, since some of the rights of children and young people are exercised on their behalf by a parent or guardian, certain sections will answer questions that they may have. These sections will be clearly highlighted. The guide also points to sources of further information, and where to get help or support.

ANY ERRORS OR INACCURACIES ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE AND THE ICCL.

This guide was researched and written by staff at the Children's Rights Alliance and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL). The Alliance and ICCL would like to thank Prof. Ursula Kilkelly and the Child Law Clinic of University College Cork for their earlier drafts of the guide.

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