

KEY CONTACT

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
INFORMATION FOR MIGRANT
WOMEN

PREGNANCY PREVENTION
CRISIS PREGNANCY OPTIONS
RELATED HEALTH MATTERS



DISCLAIMER ON CONTENTS

Although we have made every effort to ensure the information provided is accurate and up to date the information contained in this resource is not intended and must not be taken to be the provision or practice of medical or legal advice or services nor a substitute for medical or legal advice, diagnosis or treatment.

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency in preparing this resource has endeavoured to ensure all contents are accurate at time of print November 2005. However we acknowledge that information may change over time. If there are any inaccuracies please note these in writing to the Agency.

INTRODUCTION

Reproductive Health Information for Migrant Women was developed to meet the information needs of diverse migrant women in relation to reproductive health care, including crisis pregnancy. Access to professional reproductive healthcare, advice and support is relevant for all women irrespective of their age, social class, culture, ethnicity and background. Women need to know the options and supports available to them in order to make an informed choice.

This manual was created for use by those providing services to unmarried pregnant migrant women and parents. It is accompanied by a CD Rom which contains the information which is detailed in the document in six languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Romanian and Russian. If a woman needs information in one of these languages it can be printed for her from the CD.

Reproductive Health Information for Migrant Women was prepared by Treoir at the request of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. This work has been supported by a grant from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and is one of a series of resources being developed by the CPA under the banner of Key Contacts in the prevention and management of crisis pregnancy.

Louise Lesovitz was commissioned by Treoir to develop the materials. We compliment her for this thoroughly professional piece of work. She consulted extensively, researched and wrote the document. Assistance and clarification was received from in excess of 80 agencies involved in providing services, a number of whom were very generous with their time and expertise, especially Sherie de Burgh of One Family (formerly of the Irish Family Planning Association) and Linda Wilson of Dublin Well Women Centre (formerly of Cherish).

The Council members and staff of Treoir, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and many others, read

the various drafts and made very useful and productive comments.

Margot Doherty, Treoir, and Sheena McAfee, Crisis Pregnancy Agency, co-ordinated the completion of the project.

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TREOIR

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CRISIS PREGNANCY AGENCY

TREOIR

- operates a free, confidential National Information Centre for parents who are not married to each other and those involved with them.
- has many publications which are listed inside the back cover.
- promotes policy change, commissions research projects and holds conferences and workshops on a regular basis.
- provides information and support for workers with young parents through its National Resource Centre for those Working with Young Parents and the national co-ordination of the Teen Parent Support Programme

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Child abuse: The different kinds of child abuse are neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

Contraception: Birth control by the use of devices or methods (for example, by injection, patch or condom), drugs or surgery.

Crisis pregnancy: A pregnancy which is neither planned nor desired by the woman concerned, and which represents a personal crisis for her.

Emergency contraception: Methods of preventing pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse or if the contraceptive method you were using failed.

Counselling: A professional counsellor can provide an opportunity for individuals, couples and/or families to explore feelings about difficult issues and to discuss options in confidence and privacy

Family planning: A health service which advises and provides people with information and services on how to plan families and contraception.

GP: General Practitioner or family doctor who works from a local surgery providing medical advice and treatment to patients registered in her/his clinic or surgery.

Public health nurse: A specialist nurse who works in the community and in a local health centre giving medical healthcare, advice and support.

Social worker: A professional who helps individuals and families deal with difficulties, for example, physical, emotional and financial issues. A medical social worker is specially trained to discuss fears and questions about your health, for example, pregnancy.

Underage sex: It is against the law to have sex with a girl under 17 years and a boy under 15 years.

GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Guide is divided into five sections:

1. Important Issues
2. Pregnancy Prevention
3. Crisis Pregnancy Options
4. Related Health Matters
5. Useful Contacts

Fundamentally, it seeks to allay concerns and confusion about these issues.

A crisis pregnancy is defined as ‘a pregnancy which is neither planned nor desired by the woman concerned, and which represents a personal crisis for her’.¹

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency (established in 2001) understands this definition to include the experience of those women for whom a planned or desired pregnancy develops into a crisis over time due to a change in circumstances.

Consultation with different service providers and support organisations has highlighted the ongoing need to emphasise confidentiality and qualify what confidentiality means in reproductive health care and counselling in crisis pregnancy. Privacy and confidentiality issues are concerns for any individual experiencing a crisis pregnancy and this is magnified if the woman does not understand or speak English. The invisibility of minority ethnic women may often be related to fears and concerns in relation to their legal status in Ireland as opposed to traditional, socio-cultural aspects towards managing childbirth.

Knowledge of a woman’s status is important. Without knowing a woman’s current legal status it is impossible to refer them to the relevant agencies and allay their concerns and worries. Effective referral is crucial in order to ensure that a woman experiencing a crisis pregnancy has a clear and coherent understanding of her health and social welfare entitlements.

Establishing a woman’s status includes the use of indirect questions, for example:

- What is the woman’s occupation?
- What are her concerns?
- What are her worries?

Above all it is important to respect and try to accommodate, wherever possible, different

¹ Statutory Instrument No. 446 of 2001, Crisis Pregnancy Agency, Establishment Order, 2001 [available on www.crisispregnancy.ie and Irish government websites].

beliefs and customs in pregnancy and reproductive healthcare. Individual needs, fears and anxieties are magnified if one has no previous experience of a western, bureaucratised health system which can often seem alien and frightening.

The best care, support and advice is founded on the principle of continually asking individuals what they need. Effective pregnancy prevention and help in the event of a crisis pregnancy recognises that:

*'Behind any label is an individual human being who can think and speak for herself. Listen to her, give her time and space, don't assume you know what she needs or wants.'*²

² Director of midwifery education quoted in: Schott, Judith & Henley, Alix (1996), *Culture, Religion and Childbearing in a Multiracial Society*, (p242) Butterworth Heineman: Oxford.

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IMPORTANT ISSUES

This section is divided into six key areas:

1. Am I Pregnant?
2. Counselling
3. Confidentiality
4. Legal Status
5. Discrimination
6. Health Services in Ireland

1. AM I PREGNANT?

If you are a medical card holder, free pregnancy tests are available from your local GP (family doctor), some family planning clinics and some youth services.

If you are not a medical card holder you can buy a pregnancy test kit from your local pharmacy and do your own test which costs approximately €15 or you can get a pregnancy test from a GP or certain family planning clinics for a fee of about €40.

Free pregnancy testing is also available from some support services, for example, **Life** and **CURA**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

2. COUNSELLING

In Ireland, counselling is seen as a positive way of dealing with difficult issues, which most people experience at different times in their lives. Seeing a professional counsellor can help to relieve your distress, isolation, confusion and anxieties about the future. Most people feel anxious about their first visit to a counsellor because they don't know what to expect. It is important to know that you are not being judged and there is no stigma attached to seeing a counsellor. Counselling 'sessions' as they are known, generally last for about sixty minutes and can include one-to-one counselling, couple counselling, family counselling, telephone counselling. Counselling services are offered in private, safe and confidential environments and are structured around your needs and concerns.

If you

- would like advice on family planning
- think you may be pregnant and are worried about it
- would like to talk to someone in confidence

there are many different support agencies with

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counsellors who will be happy to see you. Publicly funded pregnancy counselling agencies provide counselling free of charge. You can see a counsellor at any stage during your pregnancy regardless of your income, your age or where you live. Pregnancy counselling can provide an opportunity for you to explore your feelings about your pregnancy and to discuss the options open to you in confidence and privacy. If the counsellor thinks it necessary, and you agree, s/he may refer you to another agency for more appropriate support.

Being able to access information that is useful and helpful is critical. In order to make an informed decision you need to know all your options, your rights and entitlements. These will all be explained to you in the counselling session.

For a list of special pregnancy counselling and/or pregnancy support agencies see *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide. Many GPs (family doctors) also provide counselling for women with unplanned pregnancies and can offer support and help.

You will need to make an appointment (this can be arranged over the telephone or you can call into the agency in person to make an appointment). For questions about the appointment system in Ireland see the section on 'Health Services in Ireland' on page 12.

Important note: Information on abortion is **ONLY** available through a counselling session with a counsellor or doctor, and not over the telephone. Special pregnancy counselling services have been set up in Ireland to provide information on all the options available in the event of a crisis pregnancy. While all the organisations listed under **Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Agencies** in the *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide will discuss all the options with you, only agencies with an asterisk * will give you contact details for abortion clinics if requested in a counselling session.

You can also get abortion information through your local GP (family doctor). If s/he does not wish to give you the information you require, ask her/him to refer you to a GP who will.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Concerns about legal status and confidentiality may prevent some people from getting help in a crisis pregnancy. Health care services and support agencies in Ireland generally operate on a strictly confidential and non-judgmental basis. In exceptional situations the service or information provider may, under Irish legislation, be required to break this confidentiality. In the event of this happening, the counsellor will discuss any legal implications with you. This relates specifically in cases where there are:

- Allegations of child abuse or a risk of child abuse
- Where a serious crime has been committed or threatened
- If there is reason to believe an individual presents a danger to herself/himself, for example: self-harm or suicide.

It is important to give as much information as possible about your medical history and family history to health care workers, in order for them to give you the best treatment and advice, or to refer you to a relevant service and/or agency.

If you have concerns or worries about confidentiality, ask for further clarification and assurance from everyone you contact.

4. LEGAL STATUS

Legal status refers to the basis on which you reside in Ireland under immigration law. Categories include: migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants from within or outside the European Community.

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The citizen entitlement of every person born on the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 is governed by the citizenship of the person's parents at the time of the person's birth or the residency history of one of the parents prior to the birth.

A person's entitlement to services in Ireland depends on his/her legal status, his/her income and the length of time he/she is living, or is intending to live, in Ireland.

Social welfare entitlement requires a two year "habitual residence"; maternity health services generally require a one year residency.

5. DISCRIMINATION

Under Irish equality legislation:

'Discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment. A person is said to be discriminated against if s/he is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated on any of the nine grounds'.³

The nine distinct grounds are:

Gender; Marital Status; Family Status; Disability; Sexual Orientation; Age; Religion; Race; Membership of the Traveller Community.

Free advice is available from **The Equality Authority (EA)** to anyone who believes that she or he may have experienced discriminatory treatment in relation to employment or vocational training. Under the Employment Equality Act, 1998, complaints must be brought within six months of the last act of discrimination.

Racism is a specific form of discrimination and is defined as:

'Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal

footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life'.⁴

If you have been, or are being, discriminated against, you can contact the **National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

In addition, you can consult with The Equality Authority to establish if the discrimination comes under its remit. The Authority can only give general information and can only give legal advice if you are successful in applying for legal representation with them. Information publications from the Equality Authority are available in Irish, French, Portuguese and Romanian. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

6. HEALTH SERVICES IN IRELAND

In order to qualify for free medical care you need to apply for a medical card at your local health centre. There are income limits for qualifying for a medical card.

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (FORMERLY HEALTH BOARDS)

The **Health Service Executive**, through the local health centres, is the main provider of health care at local level. This includes services provided by G.P.s, public health nurses, social workers, addiction counsellors etc. However, the **Department of Social and Family Affairs** also provides funding for some counselling services (for example, marriage and child counselling).

³ Source: The Equality Authority, website: <http://www.equality.ie>

⁴ Racial discrimination as defined in Article One of the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969). Website: www.unhchr.ch

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GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GPS – FAMILY DOCTORS)

If you are a medical card holder, you are entitled to free GP services including contraceptive advice and prescriptions for contraceptive drugs and contraceptive devices. If a GP (or a pharmacist) refuses to provide this service, the local health centre must provide you with an alternative by referring you to another GP, pharmacist or family planning association (voluntary or private). Your local health centre will give you a list of GPs in your area who participate in the medical card scheme.

VOLUNTARY/PRIVATE CLINICS AND CENTRES

The voluntary and private sector in Ireland plays a vital role in the delivery of health and personal social services. A number of specialist agencies have been developed to address specific client needs, for example, in relation to family planning and pregnancy. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Q: What do maternity services consist of in Ireland?

A: Most maternity services provided are “combined services”, that is a combination of GP services and hospital services. This includes the services of a GP during pregnancy and for up to six weeks after the birth of your child and your confinement in hospital.

Q: Are maternity services free to every woman?

A: Ante-natal (pre-birth) and post-natal (after-birth) care in the public services is free to all women. In certain circumstances, and in some regions, charges are made for the services.

Q: I am an asylum seeker. I am pregnant. What am I entitled to?

A: The **Reception and Integration Agency**, which is part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, is responsible for co-ordinating the services provided to asylum seekers in Ireland. As a medical card holder, you are entitled to free ante-natal and post-natal care in Ireland.

Regardless of whether you are in Direct Provision or in receipt of a social welfare payment, you need to contact your community welfare officer in your local health centre or **The Refugee Information Service** to find out about your social welfare entitlements.

Q: I am a migrant worker. I am pregnant. My work permit will expire in two months time. My baby is due in four months time. What am I entitled to?

A: Every individual’s case is different and you need to be aware of your status options. The important question is: Is your employer willing to renew your work permit? Under Irish legislation, you cannot be dismissed for being pregnant. In order to find out the best possible option(s) for you, contact: **Access Ireland, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Refugee Asylum Service, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Q: I am a foreign student. I am pregnant. What am I entitled to?

A: In terms of support, you are entitled to free medical care before and after the birth of your child if you have been, or intend to be, living in Ireland for one year. You may also be entitled to financial support, depending on your legal status. Full-time students are not usually entitled to Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

Q: How do I apply for a medical card?

A: Get an application form and ask for a list of participating doctors from your local health centre. To get a medical card, you need to supply a residential address and nominate a doctor (from the list) you wish to provide your health care.

Health Services normally covered by a medical card include:

- Free GP (family doctor) services;
- Prescribed drugs and medicines (with some exceptions);
- Maternity & Infant care services.

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For a full list of health entitlements, further questions and eligibility for a medical card, contact the Health Service Executive at your local health centre.

Q: Do I need to make an appointment for medical services?

A: This will depend on the service or agency you contact. It is advisable to telephone to see if they have an appointment system and if they do, how to go about this. Alternatively, you can call into the service or agency to make an appointment or to ask for further information about the services they provide.

Q: Do I need to be there at the time arranged?

A: Yes, as a general rule. Most services allocate specific time periods for specific clients and if you make an appointment, it is important to attend at the time given otherwise you will not be seen and will have to make another appointment.

Q: If I can't keep an appointment?

A: If an emergency arises or you are simply unable to attend, you need to phone and cancel your appointment, in advance, if this is possible. You will also need to arrange another appointment.

Q: Can I request a female professional?

A: In most instances you will be able to request a female practitioner, for example, a female GP. It may not always be possible in hospitals, particularly at night time.

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PREGNANCY PREVENTION

Information and education on family planning services and on contraception in Ireland is provided directly by:

- Health Service Executive (formerly Health Boards)
- GPs (family doctors)/Practice Nurses
- Family Planning Clinics

It is important to decide on the method of family planning and contraception that suits you best. There are many different types of contraceptive methods and deciding the one that is best for you can be difficult. Talking to a doctor, nurse or counsellor who can explain the different methods and answer your questions will help you to decide. If you are concerned about talking to a male doctor or professional about family planning, it is important to know that family planning clinics and Well Woman centres always have female staff available to provide information and advice. Similarly, you can ask at your local health centre for a list of female GPs practising in your area.

The addresses and telephone numbers for family planning advice and information are given in the *Useful Contacts* section at the end of this Guide. Other family planning services are listed in the Golden Pages telephone directory.

Q: Why use contraceptives?

A: In order not to become pregnant. Most contraceptive methods have a very small failure rate. Careful and correct use of a contraceptive method will minimise the chances of an unplanned pregnancy.

Many crisis pregnancies occur because of misuse of the contraceptive method.

A lot of unplanned pregnancies happen in the first few months after childbirth. You can get pregnant again as early as 21 days after your baby is born.⁵

Barrier contraceptives (for example, condoms) also protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Q: What types of contraception methods are available in Ireland?

A: There are many different types of contraception methods available:

⁵ Sourced from leaflet on contraceptive use by Schering Health Care, November 2002

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1. Combined oral contraceptive pill (commonly known as 'the pill')
2. Progestogen-only pill
3. Injectable contraceptive (Depro-Provera)
4. Contraceptive implant
5. Condoms & Spermicides
6. The Diaphragm & Cap
7. The Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD/IUD/The Coil)
8. Natural family planning
9. Sterilisation (male & female)
10. Emergency contraception ('Morning After' Pill)
11. Contraceptive Patch (Evra)
12. Vaginal ring

For further information, contact your local GP or family planning clinic. **The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)** has a series of information booklets called the Black & White Guides, which have been translated into Russian, French and Romanian. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide. Ask your GP or Family Planning Clinic for information and advice on any contraceptive method you are interested in. They will help you to decide which method is best for you. You will also be told about unreliable methods and some myths about contraception.

A comprehensive list of family planning clinics is available under 'Family Planning' in the **Golden Pages** telephone directory.

Whatever contraceptive method you choose, it is only effective if it is used consistently and by carefully following the directions for its use. Many unplanned pregnancies are a result of a contraceptive method not being used correctly, that is forgetting to use (or take) contraception or by making a mistake. If this happens, you need to contact your doctor or family planning clinic *immediately*.

Q: Does the medical card cover the cost of all contraceptives?

A: The medical card will not pay for condoms

but will pay for most other contraceptive methods, for example, the pill, injectable contraception and the IUD. Ask your GP or family planning clinic if you are unsure about your contraceptive entitlements under the medical card scheme.

Q: Do I need to get a prescription for all contraceptives?

A: You can buy condoms over the counter in most pharmacies, shops, supermarkets and from vending machines in some pubs. You can also buy female condoms and spermicides over the counter in most pharmacies. For all other methods of contraception, you will need to go to a GP or a family planning clinic and get a prescription.

Q: Will I need to give personal details before I can get a prescription for the pill?

A: The pill must be prescribed by a doctor who will need to know about your medical history before issuing a prescription. S/he will want to measure your blood pressure, your weight and to ask you if you smoke. Smoking poses a variety of reproductive health risks.

Q: Is there an age restriction in obtaining contraceptives legally?

A: Condoms may be sold without prescription to a person whether under or over 17 years of age. The sale of contraceptives (other than condoms) to an unmarried person under 17 years of age is unlawful except by way of prescription. Doctors are not obliged to consult with, or obtain the consent of, the parents of a person under 17 prior to issuing such a prescription.

Q: What offers the best protection against Sexual Transmitted Infections?

A: Condoms, when and if used properly, are the most effective protection against sexually transmitted infections.

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Q: If I am on the pill and taking antibiotics, is it still effective?

A: No, generally you need to take additional precautions. Consult your GP or family planning clinic immediately. Other medication may stop the pill from working as will vomiting or severe diarrhoea. For further advice or any concerns you may have about using the pill, talk to your GP, family planning clinic or pharmacist.

Q: Is breastfeeding an effective method of contraception?

A: Breastfeeding is **NOT** a reliable method of contraception. However, the decision to breastfeed or not is very important. There are contraception methods that can be used while breastfeeding. In order to make an informed decision, talk to your GP, family planning clinic or the public health nurse in your local health centre.

Important note: Breastfeeding offers many benefits to both baby and mother. Health benefits associated with breastfed babies, for example, are to the baby's immune system, prevention of disease, decreased risk of allergies and better dental development.

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CRISIS PREGNANCY OPTIONS

If you are experiencing a crisis pregnancy (regardless of whether the pregnancy was planned or unplanned), you need to make a decision about the pregnancy which is right for you. In order for this decision to be an informed choice, you need to know all the options as they exist currently in Ireland. It is important to think through all these options and to establish what supports, financial and social, you may have with regard to the various options open to you. This will enable you to make the decision that is best for you.

Any decision you make must be the right one for you.

Your options:

1. Becoming a Parent
2. Adoption
3. Abortion

1. BECOMING A PARENT

If you decide to proceed with your pregnancy and become a parent, either on your own or with a partner, it is important to get relevant advice and information on your legal rights and social welfare entitlements. Your legal status may influence which benefits are available to you.

Relevant information you may need includes:

- Maternity/parental leave
- Financial entitlements
- Public health services
- Legal information for unmarried parents

MATERNITY LEAVE

- You are entitled to Maternity Leave no matter how recently you have started work.
- You must be in a job where you pay Social Insurance (PRSI) Contributions.
- You are entitled to attend one set of ante-natal classes without loss of pay (except the last 3 classes in a set).
- You are entitled to 18 weeks Maternity Leave.
- You can also take an additional 8 weeks Maternity Leave, but you won't get Maternity Benefit for these extra 8 weeks.

PARENTAL LEAVE

- Each parent is entitled to 14 weeks **unpaid** parental leave over 5 years, for each child up until the child is 5.

For more information on Maternity and Parental Leave contact **The Equality Authority**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

FINANCIAL ENTITLEMENTS

You must be "habitually resident" in Ireland in order to qualify for **social assistance payments**. If you have been living in the Common Travel Area for 2 years or more, have worked within the CTA and now live in Ireland and have the intention to remain in Ireland and make it your permanent home, you will satisfy the habitual residence condition. The Common Travel Area

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is Ireland, Great Britain, the Channel islands and the Isle of Man.

You must be habitually resident in Ireland to qualify for the following payments which are available from the **Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA)**:

- * Unemployment Assistance
- * Old Age Non-Contributory Pension
- * Blind Pension
- * Widow(er)'s Non-Contributory Pension and Orphan's Non-Contributory Pension
- * One-Parent Family Payment
- * Carer's Allowance
- * Disability Allowance
- * Supplementary Welfare Allowance (other than once-off exceptional and urgent needs payments)
- * Child Benefit.

EU/EEA citizens and Swiss nationals who are employed or self-employed in Ireland and subject to the Irish Social Insurance system, do not have to satisfy the habitual residence condition to qualify for Family Benefits. The following Irish social welfare payments are classified as Family Benefits under EU Regulations:

- * One-Parent Family Payment
- * Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension
- * Family Income Supplement
- * Child Benefit.

Maternity Benefit

Maternity Benefit is a payment for employed and self-employed women who are paying Pay-related Social Insurance (PRSI) and have the necessary number of contributions (at least 39 in the relevant year). As this is a social insurance payment you do not have to satisfy the habitual residence requirement in order to receive Maternity Benefit. You must be in employment when you apply for Maternity Benefit. The amount of Maternity Benefit you will receive depends on how much you are earning.

If you qualify you will receive Maternity Benefit for 18 weeks. You should apply for Maternity Benefit at least 6 weeks before your baby is due. You can get a claim form from your Social Welfare Local Office, Post Office, or from the **Maternity Benefit Section of DSFA**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is a payment for all children living in Ireland regardless of the income of the parents. However the habitual residency rule must be satisfied. Payment continues until children are 16 years old or reach their 19th birthday if they are in full-time education. The payment is paid on a monthly basis.

Application for Child Benefit is automatic when the birth of a child is registered. You do not need to apply for it.

One-Parent Family Payment (OPF)

One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) is for both men and women who are bringing up a child or children without the support of a partner. You can apply for this payment if you are unmarried, widowed, a prisoner's spouse, separated, divorced, or your marriage has been annulled and you are no longer living with your spouse. Your payment is made up of a personal rate for yourself and an extra amount for each dependant child. Your personal rate will depend on your means (that is, your income).

You qualify for this payment if you:

- Are responsible for the main care of at least one child who is living with you and is under 18 years of age, or under 22 years if in full-time education.
- Are not cohabiting, that is, living with someone as husband and wife.
- Have earnings of €293.00 or less per week.
- Satisfy a means test - this relates to any other income you have, or property (except your home), or an asset which could bring in money or provide you with an income.
- Are habitually resident in the State (see above).

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For further details on One-Parent Family Payment contact the **One-Parent Family Section of DSFA**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme (SWA)

Supplementary Welfare Allowance provides a basic weekly allowance as a right to eligible people who have little or no income. People with low incomes may also qualify for a weekly supplement payment under the scheme to meet certain special needs, for example, help with rent/mortgage interest payments. In addition, payments can also be made in respect of urgent or exceptional needs.

Basic Payments

If you have no income, you may be entitled to the basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance. If your weekly income is below the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your family size, a payment may be made to bring your income up to the appropriate Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate. If you have claimed a social welfare benefit or pension but it has not yet been paid and you have no other income, you may qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance while you are awaiting payment.

Supplements

If your income, whether from the basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance or otherwise, is too low to meet certain special needs, you may be granted a weekly supplement. Special needs may include:

- * Rent or mortgage interest payments
- * Exceptional heating expenses due to ill health. You will require a letter from your doctor before this supplement can be granted.
- * Special diet due to a medical condition such as diabetes or coeliac disease. Usually, it must be prescribed by a hospital consultant or a hospital registrar. However, in certain cases, for example, a low fat diet, the diet may be prescribed by a GP.

The amount of any supplement will be decided by the Health Service Executive depending on your circumstances.

Exceptional Needs Payments

You may be paid an Exceptional Needs Payment to assist with essential, once-off expenditure in exceptional circumstances. Expenditure of a predictable or recurring nature, such as fuel or clothing should be budgeted for out of your weekly income. There is no automatic right of entitlement to an Exceptional Needs Payment. Payment is at the discretion of the Health Service Executive, taking into account all your circumstances.

Depending on your circumstances, an Exceptional Needs Payment may be paid to assist with the cost of:

- * Bedding or other essential household equipment, such as cots, buggies, baby clothes
- * Funeral expenses
- * Other unforeseen large expenses.

Urgent Needs Payments

You may be paid an Urgent Needs Payment even if you are not normally eligible to receive assistance under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme. Payments are normally made to assist with immediate needs such as food and clothing in the aftermath of a fire or flood.

Depending on your circumstances, you may have to pay back all or part of what you have been paid, for example, if you are working or once an insurance claim has been settled.

Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance Scheme

This scheme gives assistance towards the cost of clothing and footwear for children of school-going age (up to 22 if in full-time education) and whose parents are getting a social welfare or SWA payment. The scheme operates from the beginning of June to the end of September each year.

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National Fuel Scheme

You may be eligible for a weekly allowance under the National Fuel Scheme during the winter months, subject to certain qualifying conditions. An additional weekly Smokeless Fuel Allowance is payable to help with the extra cost of smokeless fuel if you live in an area where the sale of bituminous coal is banned.

Applying for SWA

To apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance, you should contact the community welfare officer at your local health centre. S/he will be responsible for making decisions in relation to your application. Details of community welfare officer clinic times are available from the local health centre.

In order to qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance, you must:

- Be habitually resident in the State (except for “exceptional” or “urgent” needs payments)
- Have means that are insufficient to meet your needs
- Have applied for all allowances/benefits to which you may be entitled to, for example: Unemployment Assistance, One-Parent Family Payment, etc.

Normally, you will not qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance if you are working full-time or in full-time education.

Further information:

Information is available from your **Social Welfare Local Office**, on the internet: www.welfare.ie and from AERTEL, RTE’s teletext service.

Information booklets, leaflets and application forms are available from Social Welfare Local Offices, Post Offices or by telephoning the Department of Social and Family Affairs’ Leaflet Line on: LoCall 1890 20 23 25

Information on all social welfare payments and supplementary welfare allowances are available

from your local **Citizens Information Centre** (listed in the *Golden Pages*).

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Q: I am pregnant, what am I entitled to during my pregnancy?

A: If you have a medical card or have been living, or intend to live, in Ireland for at least a year, you are entitled to access ante-natal (pre-birth) care. This is medical and social care before your child is born. You are entitled to, for example:

- Maternity services
- Antenatal classes and visits
- Information about having a home birth
- Maternity leave

Q: After my baby is born, what am I/my baby entitled to?

A: Under the Maternity & Infant Care Scheme, your baby is entitled to two free visits to your GP (family doctor). The first visit is when your baby is two weeks old and the second when s/he is six weeks old.

Q: What does a public health nurse do?

A: If you have given birth to your baby in an Irish hospital, a public health nurse will visit you when you go home. You will not have to contact a public health nurse as they will contact you automatically following the birth of your child. If you have had a homebirth your midwife will have already visited you. The public health nurse is employed by the Health Service Executive and can help you with:

- Advice & support on your own health care and that of your baby
- Breastfeeding
- Feeding and diet (when your baby moves on to solid foods)
- Developmental checks
- Your baby’s vaccinations

Developmental checks can take place in your local health centre or in your home and are free of charge. These checks monitor and chart your baby’s development.

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LEGAL INFORMATION FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS

Treoir has translated legal information for unmarried parents into Arabic, Chinese, French, Romanian and Russian and is downloadable from Treoir's website www.treoir.ie/publications.

Information covered includes:

- Registering a birth
- Parenting together
- Guardianship
- Custody
- Access
- Maintenance
- Applying for a passport
- Unmarried fathers
- Child abduction.

See *Treoir/CPA Publications* page 36 for other useful publications.

2. ADOPTION

Q: What is Adoption?

A: Adoption is a legal procedure where an unmarried parent can choose to place her child with another family for life. Once an Adoption Order is finalised it cannot be revoked. All adoptions must be arranged through the Health Service Executive or an adoption agency. These agencies are registered with the **Adoption Board**. The child of married persons can only be placed for adoption in cases of abandonment.⁶

In Ireland adoption may be 'closed' or 'open'. 'Closed' adoption is where the birth and adoptive parents do not meet each other. 'Open' adoption means that there is some contact between both sets of parents. The degree of contact depends on the parents and the particular agency involved. However, whatever adoption agency or agencies you approach, they will give you information and support in making the right decision for you and your child.

The mother will be required to give her consent to the adoption by signing various documents.

The father will not be required to give his consent unless he has been appointed a guardian of the child. If he has not been appointed a guardian, he has the right to be consulted about the adoption, but this does not mean that his consent is required.

If you are considering adoption as an option, the adoption agencies and pregnancy counselling services listed in *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide will give you further information.

Important note: If you decide to choose adoption as an option, it is very important to keep in contact with the adoption agency throughout the full process, that is, until the final adoption order has been signed. This is usually a number of months after the child has been placed with the adoptive family. If you have any concerns about your legal status, a special application can be made to the **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform** in relation to extending your visa until the adoption process has been completed. The adoption agency will give you further information about how to do this or you can contact the Department directly. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Q: What is an Adoption Order?

A: An adoption order secures in law the position of the child in the adoptive family. On the making of the adoption order the parent loses all legal rights over the child and is freed from all duties. These rights and duties are transferred to the adoptive parents. The child is regarded in law as the child of the adoptive parents as if s/he were born to them in marriage. Legal adoption is permanent.

Q: What can I do if I am thinking about adoption as an option?

A: There are many adoption agencies in Ireland which provide confidential information. The **Adoption Board** will also give you information

⁶ Source: Adoption Board Website: <http://www.adoptionboard.ie>

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on the adoption procedure in Ireland. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide for a list of adoption agencies. The Health Service Executive also provides adoption services. Social workers in maternity and general hospitals can give you information and support as well.

Q: Will I know where my child is going to be placed?

A: No. Generally addresses are not exchanged. Meetings in 'open' adoptions between parents usually take place in a neutral place.

Q: Will my child be brought up aware of his or her culture?

A: Adoption agencies try to place an adopted child with a family who will bring the child up aware of the cultural background of their birth mother and/or father. This also relates to religion – as a parent you are entitled to know the religion of the adopting parents before and when you give consent to your child's adoption.

Important note: It is important to remember that all adoption agencies operate on a strictly confidential basis.

For more information contact the Adoption Board. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

3. ABORTION

Q: What is abortion?

A: Abortion, or termination, is the ending of a pregnancy through a surgical procedure.

As stated in 'The law on abortion information' (government website: <http://www.oasis.gov.ie>): 'Abortion is illegal in Ireland except where there is a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother including a risk arising from a threat of suicide. Women may not be prevented from travelling abroad to get an abortion. It is lawful to provide information in Ireland about abortions abroad, subject to strict conditions

(for example in a pregnancy counselling session and not over the phone). It is not lawful to encourage or advocate an abortion in individual cases.'

Women in Ireland who decide to have an abortion have to travel to another country where abortion is legal. Most Irish women travel to England because it is the closest country. Because the abortion is in a private clinic in England, it must be paid for privately. There is no medical card cover or any other government payment to cover the cost of an abortion service or travel expenses.

For some non-Irish women, travelling for an abortion can be difficult and will depend on visa status. Subject to the conditions of your visa, you may have to get special permission to leave Ireland and return. If a woman needs permission to travel, she will need to provide the following to the Visa Office, Immigration and Citizens Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:

- a letter from either the counselling service she has attended or her G.P. and
- a letter from the clinic in England (or wherever the abortion is to take place) confirming an appointment has been made.

The agencies listed in *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide may be able to assist with this. Some doctors, counsellors and specific agencies give information about abortion abroad in a counselling session, while some do not. However all will offer counselling on all crisis pregnancy options.

Agencies indicated with an asterisk * in *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide will give contact details for abortion clinics during a face to face pregnancy counselling session.

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RELATED HEALTH MATTERS

1. Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture
2. Domestic Violence
3. Female Genital Mutilation
4. Harassment
5. HIV Positive Mother
6. Male Circumcision
7. Miscarriage, Still Birth and Sudden Infant Death
8. Rape
9. Sexually Transmitted Infections

1. CENTRE FOR THE CARE OF SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

The Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture is a non-profit humanitarian organisation that works with the survivors of torture to engage in a healing process to achieve their full potential whatever their ethnic origin, gender, religious or political background in the common goal of the prevention of torture worldwide.⁷

Set up in 2001, the Centre offers a range of specialised services (medical, counselling, legal, etc.). The Centre will make referrals to other agencies where appropriate and required. Clients come from refugee and asylum-seeking communities in Ireland.

For further information, contact the **Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

2. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Violence within a family or personal relationships, such as marriage, is a crime and in Ireland is commonly called 'domestic violence'. The Domestic Violence Act (1996) provides for the protection, safety and welfare of married people, cohabiting couples, parents, children and others living in a domestic relationship. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual or psychological (mental) violence.

A leaflet entitled, '*Protection from Domestic Violence*' is available from the **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

⁷ Source: CCST Mission statement as taken from their website.

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3. FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision (as it is sometimes known) is illegal in Ireland. Women who have been circumcised have very specific health needs, for example: medical, gynaecological and obstetric. In relation to pregnancy, FGM (in more severe forms) can have complications and severe consequences in childbirth delivery.

If you would like to talk to someone in confidence about this issue, contact **Comhlamh**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

4. HARASSMENT

A person is guilty of harassment if s/he harasses you by

- persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with you, and
- intentionally or recklessly seriously interfering with your peace and privacy, or
- causing alarm, distressing or harming you.

To take an action for harassment known as 'Breach of the Peace' go to the local District Court and ask for the court clerk. In Dublin go to the **Summons Office**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

5. HIV POSITIVE MOTHER

HIV testing and clinical services for individuals with AIDS have been developed in Ireland since 1985. In clinical practice, routine screening for the HIV virus is offered to **all** pregnant women when they attend an antenatal clinic.

Confidentiality, non-judgemental attitudes and clear information are central in the health care given to HIV positive women in Ireland.

For HIV positive mothers, it is critical to know that the HIV virus can be transmitted through breastfeeding. Therefore, breastfeeding is not recommended if you are HIV positive.

For more information contact your local family planning clinic, well woman clinic, GP or public health nurse in your local health centre. You can also contact **Cairde**, an organisation based in Dublin which actively supports HIV positive people and their families. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

6. MALE CIRCUMCISION

Male circumcision is not illegal in Ireland and can be arranged with the help of healthcare professionals. You can talk to your public health nurse, midwife, GP, local health centre and/or children's hospital about male circumcision before or after the birth of your baby. A circumcision that is performed by a non-medical person in unsafe conditions (that is a place without medical support) will put a baby's life in danger and is illegal. It is important that circumcision is performed only by licensed medical professionals.

7. MISCARRIAGE, STILL BIRTH AND SUDDEN INFANT DEATH

If you have experienced a miscarriage, still birth or sudden infant death, you can get help through bereavement counselling, childbirth counselling and/or information on how to register a death from **The Miscarriage Association of Ireland, Irish Still Birth and Neonatal Death Society and/or Irish Sudden Infant Death Association**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

8. RAPE

Rape is a crime in Ireland regardless of the relationship between the individuals involved. Irish legislation recognises rape within marriage, by a partner, boyfriend, family member or friend to be a crime. Under the Civil Legal Aid Act, free legal advice is available

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in cases of serious sexual assault. Contact the **Legal Aid Board**.

Rape crisis centres provide free, confidential counselling services for women and men who have been raped and/or sexually abused at any time in their lives, or for anyone who wants to talk about sexual violence. The **Dublin Rape Crisis Centre** operates a free 24 hour telephone helpline (with trained counsellors) seven days a week at **1800 77 88 88**. They can also give you the telephone numbers for the other rape crisis centres around the country. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

9. SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

It is extremely important to contact a health professional or service if you are pregnant and have been exposed (or think you may have been) to a sexually transmitted infection. You need to do this immediately in order to get treatment and support as soon as possible. Health care and social support for migrant and ethnic minority individuals with HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are run in compliance with international conventions. Everyone in Ireland is 'eligible for such treatment as is available and appropriate for his or her illness, free of charge where necessary'.⁸ All migrants, regardless of their residential status, are entitled to access treatment and support for HIV/AIDS and STIs. Concern and worry about your legal status or the confidentiality of services may prevent you from seeking assistance. Be assured of the utmost confidentiality of all the services.

The Irish Family Planning Association's information booklet (**the Black & White Guide to Sexually Transmitted Infections**) is available in English, French, Romanian and Russian. For copies of this and other information guides, contact the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA). You can also contact the Well Woman clinics for information and counselling services.

See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Additionally, most main hospitals have Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM clinics) where sexually transmitted infections are diagnosed and treated in a strictly confidential way. For example, although the two GUM clinics in Dublin ask for a patient's name and address, the service is completely confidential. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

⁸ Source: Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan in 'AIDS & Drugs Service of the Eastern Health Board'.

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USEFUL CONTACTS

In an emergency call 112. You will not be charged for using this number and the operator will immediately alert the relevant emergency services (ambulance, fire department, police (Gardai), coast guard and mountain rescue).

TREOIR

National Information Centre for Unmarried Parents

National Resource Centre for those Working with Young Parents

14 Gandon House
Custom House Square
IFSC

Dublin 1

LoCall: 1890 252 084

Tel: 01 6700 120

Email: info@treoir.ie

Website: www.treoir.ie

Through the free and confidential **National Information Centre** Treoir provides information on legal issues, social welfare entitlements and other issues affecting unmarried parents. *See a list of Treoir publications on page 36.*

A National Data Base of Useful Services is available on the website

PREGNANCY COUNSELLING AGENCIES

* Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Counselling and Support Service

Marina House
Portiuncula Hospital
Ballinasloe
Co. Galway

LoCall: 1850 200 600

Tel: 090 964 8190

Monday to Friday 9 - 5

Email: ballinasloecps@mailn.hse.ie

Website: www.whb.ie/ourservices

* Services indicated with an asterisk will give contact details for abortion clinics during a face-to-face counselling session.

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CURA

Available in 17 centres around the country

Callsave: 1850 622626
Monday to Friday 9.30 – 9 Saturday 10 – 5
Email: cura@iol.ie
Website: www.cura.ie

* Dublin Well Woman Centre

35 Lower Liffey Street Tel: 01 872 8051
Ballsbridge Tel: 01 660 9860
Coolock Tel: 01 848 4511

Monday to Friday 9 – 7.30. Saturday 10 – 4.

Email: info@wellwomancentre.ie
Website: www.wellwomancentre.ie/

* Irish Family Planning Association

Available in 8 centres around the country

Callsave: 1850 49 50 51
Monday to Friday: 9 – 5
Email: post@ifpa.ie
Website: www.ifpa.ie

LIFE Pregnancy Care Service

Available in 6 centres around the country

Callsave: 1850 281281
Monday to Sunday 9 – 9
Email: life@life.ie
Website: www.life.ie

* Mayo Crisis Pregnancy Support Services

Mayo General Hospital

Castlebar

Co Mayo

LoCall: 1890 20 00 22

Monday to Friday 9.30 – 5.

* Midlands Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service (CPCS)

Available in 6 centres in the Midlands area

Health Service Executive

Midlands Region

Regional Children & Family Services

Arden Road

Tullamore

Co.Offaly

Freephone: 1800 200 857

Tel: 0506 263 70

Monday to Friday 9.30 – 1. 2 – 3.30.

Email: crisispregnancy.counselling@mailq.hse.ie

* One Family

Cherish House

2 Lower Pembroke Street

Dublin 2

LoCall: 1890 662 212

Tel: 01 662 9212

Monday to Friday 9-5

Email: info@onefamily.ie

Website: www.onefamily.ie

* PACT

15 Belgrave Road

Rathmines

Dublin 6

Callsave: 1850 673333

Monday to Friday 10.30 – 4

Email: pact@eircom.net

Website: www.pact.ie

Crisis Pregnancy Agency website

www.positiveoptions.ie

Positive Options is a directory of agencies skilled in the area of crisis pregnancy. For details visit www.positiveoptions.ie or Freetext LIST to 50444.

* Services indicated with an asterisk will give contact details for abortion clinics during a face-to-face counselling session.

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ORGANISATIONS FOR MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES

Access Ireland

Cultural Mediation Programme and Refugee Women's Programme
40-41 Dominick Street Lower
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 878 0589

Email: accessireland@connect.ie

Afghan Community of Ireland Association

20 Ashington Gardens
Off Navan Road
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 868 3577

Email: afgcommunity@hotmail.com

Website: www.nasruddinsaljoqi.tripod.com

Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture

213 North Circular Road
Phibsboro
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 838 9664

Email: info@ccst.ie or mike@ccst.ie

Website: www.ccst.ie

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

72-76 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 602 8202

Website: www.justice.ie

Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform Reception and Integration Agency

Block C, Ardilaun Centre
112-114 St Stephen's Green West
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 418 3200

Responsible for co-ordinating services provided for asylum seekers in Ireland. Works in partnership with other state agencies, voluntary and community groups, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Emigrant Advice and Counselling Service

1a Cathedral Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 873 2844

Immigrant Council of Ireland (status/welfare enquiries)

2 St. Andrew Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 645 8046

Email: info@immigrantcouncil.ie

Website: www.immigrantcouncil.ie

NASC

Irish Immigrant Support Centre
St. Mary's of the Isle
Sharman Crawford Street
Cork

Tel: 021 431 7411

Irish Chinese Information Centre

57 Smithfield Square
(Opposite Chief O'Neill's Hotel)
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 7312

Irish Refugee Council (policy and legal issues)

40 Lower Dominic Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 873 0042

1 Bank Place
Ennis
Co. Clare

Tel: 065 6822 026

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

55 Parnell Square
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 889 7570

Email: info@mrci.ie

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National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

Third Floor
Jervis House
Jervis Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 478 5777
Email: nccri@eircom.net
Website: www.nccri.com

Refugee Information Service (legal and welfare information)

27 Annamoe Terrace
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 838 2740
(Clinics in Dublin are in Blanchardstown, Green Street, Manor Street, Rathmines, Rialto and Tallaght).

Refugee Legal Service (asylum seekers)

48/49 North Brunswick Street
Georges Lane
Smithfield
Dublin 7

Freephone: 1800 238 243
Tel: 01 646 9600

SPIRASI (health information, support and educational courses)

Spiritan House
213 North Circular Road
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 838 9664

Unaccompanied Minors

Social Work Service
Baggot Street Hospital
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 668 1577

Vincentian Refugee Project (support with accommodation etc.)

St. Peter's Church
Phibsborough
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 810 2580

MATERNITY HOSPITALS

Medical social workers are available in most large maternity hospitals and can provide information and counselling. Maternity hospitals can arrange for translators to be brought into the hospital or can arrange a translation service over the telephone. Maternity hospitals, throughout Ireland, can be found in the local telephone directory under "Hospitals".

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (REGIONAL OFFICES)

HSE Western Region
Merlin Park Regional Hospital
Galway
Tel: 091 751 131

HSE Dublin/Mid-Leinster Region
Arden Road
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 21 868

HSE Dublin/North Eastern Region
Dublin Road
Kells
Co Meath
Tel: 046 928 0500

HSE Southern Region
Cork Farm Centre
Wilton
Cork
Tel: 021 454 5011

FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

Cork Family Planning Centre
23 Tuckey Street
Cork
Telephone: 021 4277906

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Dublin Well Woman Centre

35 Lower Liffey Street Tel: 01 872 8051
Ballsbridge Tel: 01 660 9860
Coolock Tel: 01 848 4511
Monday to Friday 9 – 7.30. Saturday 10 – 4.
Email: info@wellwomancentre.ie
Website: www.wellwomancentre.ie/

Galway Family Planning Clinic

Augustine Street
Galway
Tel: 091 562 992

Irish Family Planning Association

Available in 8 centres around the country
Callsave: 1850 49 50 51
Monday to Friday: 9 - 5
Email: post@ifpa.ie
Website: www.ifpa.ie
The IFPA has a medical card scheme in place

Letterkenny Women's Centre

Port Road
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 912 4985

Limerick Family Planning Clinic

27 Mallow Street
Limerick
Tel: 061 312 026

Tralee Family Planning and Women's Health Clinic

29 Ashe Street
Tralee
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 712 5322

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Child Benefit Section

Social Welfare Services Office
St Oliver Plunkett Road
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal
LoCall: 1890 400 400
Tel: 01 874 8444 or 074 25 566

Information Service

Store Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 704 3000
Website: www.welfare.ie

Maternity Benefit Section

Social Welfare Services Office
Oliver Plunkett Road
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
LoCall: 1890 690 690
Tel: 704 3475 or 043 - 45 211 extn 8753 or 043 - 40 080

One-Parent Family Section

Pension Services Office
College Road
Sligo
LoCall: 1890 500 000
Tel: 071 9148376

Information booklets, leaflets and application forms are available

- From your Social Welfare Local Office
- On the internet at www.welfare.ie or
- By telephoning the Department's Leaflet Line at LoCall 1890 202335

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ADOPTION AGENCIES

The Health Service Executive (see p30) provides adoption services. In addition the following agencies provide adoption services.

CUNAMH

CPRSI House
30 South Anne Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 677 9664

PACT

Support & counselling for unplanned pregnancy
15 Belgrave Road
Rathmines
Dublin 6

Tel: 01 497 6788

St Catherine's Adoption Society

Clarecare, Harmony Row
Ennis
Co. Clare

Tel: 065 682 8178

St Mura's Adoption Society

The Pastoral Centre
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal

Tel: 074 21 853

OTHER ADOPTION AGENCIES

The Adoption Board

Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

Tel: 01 667 1392

Website: www.adoptionboard.ie

Barnardo's Adoption Advice Service

Christchurch Square
Dublin 8

Tel: 01 454 6388

Tuesdays: 2 - 5 Thursdays: 10 - 2

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Cairde Healthwise Project

19 Belvedere Place
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 855 2113

Email: info@cairdre.ie

Website: www.cairde.ie

Dublin AIDS Alliance

Tel: 01 873 3799

Dublin Well Woman

35 Lower Liffey Street Tel: 01 872 8051

Ballsbridge Tel: 01 660 9860

Coolock Tel: 01 848 4511

Monday to Friday 9 - 7.30. Saturday 10 - 4.

Email: info@wellwomancentre.ie

Website: www.wellwomancentre.ie

Drugs/HIV Helpline

Tel: 1800 459 459

General Public HIV Testing

Baggot Street Clinic
Haddington Road
Dublin 4

Tel: 1800 201 187

Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinic

St James's Hospital
James's Street
Dublin 8

Tel: 01 416 2315/6

Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)

5 - 7 Cathal Brugha Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 872 7088

Website: www.ifpa.ie

Level 3
The Square
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Tel: 01 459 7685

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Mater Misericordiae Hospital

Infectious Disease Clinic
Outpatients Department,
North Circular Road,
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 803 2063

Clinics are available in local/regional hospitals in Castlebar, Cork, Galway, Ennis, Limerick, Nenagh, Sligo, Waterford.

Useful websites for information on women's health and sexual health:

Think Contraception: www.thinkcontraception.ie

Brook Advisory Centres: www.brook.org.uk

Cool Sex Information: www.coolsexinfo.org.uk

Family Planning Association: www.fpa.org.uk

HSE Dublin North Eastern Region Youth Health Information: www.youthhealthne.ie

HSE Dublin North Eastern Region Women's Health: www.nehb.ie/womenshealth

Sheffield Centre for Sexual Health:
www.sexualhealthsheffield.co.uk

Terence Higgins Trust: www.tht.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL ADDRESSES

Comhairle supports the national network of Citizens Information Centres which provide a confidential free information service. Many also provide legal clinics.

For details of your local Citizens Information Centre, check 'Golden Pages' or contact Comhairle at 01 605 9000.

Comhairle's Oasis database at www.oasis.gov.ie provides information on life events, such as having a baby, marriage, death, health services, social welfare entitlements etc.

Comhlamh (Association of Returned Development Workers)

10 Upper Camden Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 478 34900

Email: info@comhlamh.org

Website: www.comhlamh.org

Also at:
55 Grand Parade
Cork

Tel: 021 275 881

Email: comhcork@iol.ie

Community Relations Section

Garda Headquarters
Harcourt Square
Harcourt Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 666 3150/01 666 3817

Email: agecard@iol.ie

Website: www.garda.ie

Dochas For Women

Old Station House
North Road
Monaghan

Tel: 047 30 768

Dochas offers counselling, information, support and education programmes. Services are also open to men.

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

70 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2

Freephone: 1 800 77 88 88

Tel: 01 661 4911

Email: rcc@indigo.ie

Website: www.drcc.ie

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FLAC

(Free Legal Advice Centres)
13 Lower Dorset Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 679 4239
Email: info@flac.ie
Website: www.flac.ie

General Register Office

Joyce House
8-11 Lombard Street East,
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 635 4000
Website: www.groireland.ie

Responsible for registration of births, deaths and marriages. For local offices, see local telephone directories.

Gingerbread Ireland

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 873 8702
Email: info@gingerbread.ie
Website: www.gingerbread.ie

Irish Still Birth and Neo Natal Death Society

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 6996

Irish Sudden Infant Death Association

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 873 2711

Legal Aid Board

(Head Office)
Quay Street
Caherciveen
Co.Kerry

Tel: 066 947 1000

St Stephen's Green House
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 240 0900
Website: www.legalaidboard.ie

Miscarriage Association of Ireland

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 2914

One Family

Cherish House
2 Lower Pembroke Street
Dublin 2

National Helpline: 1890 662 212
Tel: 01 662 9212
Email: info@onefamily.ie
Website: www.onefamily.ie

One Family offers free information, support and training programmes, counselling on all options in crisis pregnancy and counselling for adults in one parent families. All services are supported by free on-site childcare.

Parent Support Programme Limerick

Social Services Centre
Henry Street
Limerick

Tel: 061 411 643/061 314 111
Email: npsqmidwest@eircom.net

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Passport Office

Department of Foreign Affairs
Setana House
Molesworth Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 671 1633

Website: www.gov.ie/iveagh/

Summons Office

Aras Ui Dhalaigh
Inns Quay
Dublin 7

Tel: 888 6117 / 8

The Equality Authority

Clonmel Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 1890 245 545

Email: info@equality.ie

Website: www.equality.ie

Visa Office

Immigration & Citizens Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
13/14 Burgh Quay
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 663 1000

Women's Aid

Everton House
47 Old Cabra Road
Dublin 7

Helpline: 1800 34 19 00

Tel: 01 868 4721

Email: info@womensaid.ie

Website: www.womensaid.ie

Women's Health Project

Baggot Street
19 Haddington Road
Dublin 4

Tel: 1800 201187

(For women working in prostitution)

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PUBLICATIONS

TREOIR Publications

"Being There for Them" - a booklet for grandparents of children whose parents are not married to each other

Bulletin information for unmarried parents and those involved with them - send us your name and address

Family Links: steps and stages - shared parenting and step-families €5

Information for Young Parents in Education

Information Pack for Unmarried Parents

Newsletter for workers with young parents - send us your name and address

Resource Pack for Workers with Young Parents

Taking the Stand - a guide for unmarried parents resolving disputes regarding care of their children €5

Work it Out! - a guide for parents on One-Parent Family Payment (re)entering the workforce or education

Information Leaflets

1. *The Children Act 1997 (guardianship by agreement)*
2. *The Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 (harassment)*
3. *Guardianship, access, custody*
4. *Shared parenting*
5. *Rights of unmarried fathers*
6. *Maintenance*
7. *Family adoption (mothers and husbands)*
8. *Passport applications*
9. *Ante/post natal accommodation*
10. *Birth registration*

11. *Cohabitation*

12. *Unmarried parents and equality legislation*

All publications can be downloaded from our website www.treoir.ie/publications.

WEB based information

Legal information for unmarried parents

Treoir has translated legal information for unmarried parents into Arabic, Chinese, French, Romanian and Russian and is downloadable from Treoir's website www.treoir.ie/publications.

Information covered includes:

- Registering a birth
- Parenting together
- Guardianship
- Custody
- Access
- Maintenance
- Applying for a passport
- Unmarried Fathers
- Child abduction.

This resource is not available as a printed publication.

Useful services database

Pregnant and Thinking about Adoption?

Unmarried Parents - not just a single issue

CPA Publications

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency produces a range of research publications and information materials. Details of these are available from the Agency website www.crisispregnancy.ie

Additional Agency websites are www.positiveoptions.ie and www.thinkcontraception.ie

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IMPORTANT ISSUES

This section is divided into six key areas:

1. Am I Pregnant?
2. Counselling
3. Confidentiality
4. Legal Status
5. Discrimination
6. Health Services in Ireland

1. AM I PREGNANT?

If you are a medical card holder, free pregnancy tests are available from your local GP (family doctor), some family planning clinics and some youth services.

If you are not a medical card holder you can buy a pregnancy test kit from your local pharmacy and do your own test which costs approximately €15 or you can get a pregnancy test from a GP or certain family planning clinics for a fee of about €40.

Free pregnancy testing is also available from some support services, for example, **Life** and **CURA**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

2. COUNSELLING

In Ireland, counselling is seen as a positive way of dealing with difficult issues, which most people experience at different times in their lives. Seeing a professional counsellor can help to relieve your distress, isolation, confusion and anxieties about the future. Most people feel anxious about their first visit to a counsellor because they don't know what to expect. It is important to know that you are not being judged and there is no stigma attached to seeing a counsellor. Counselling 'sessions' as they are known, generally last for about sixty minutes and can include one-to-one counselling, couple counselling, family counselling, telephone counselling. Counselling services are offered in private, safe and confidential environments and are structured around your needs and concerns.

If you

- would like advice on family planning
- think you may be pregnant and are worried about it
- would like to talk to someone in confidence

there are many different support agencies with

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counsellors who will be happy to see you. Publicly funded pregnancy counselling agencies provide counselling free of charge. You can see a counsellor at any stage during your pregnancy regardless of your income, your age or where you live. Pregnancy counselling can provide an opportunity for you to explore your feelings about your pregnancy and to discuss the options open to you in confidence and privacy. If the counsellor thinks it necessary, and you agree, s/he may refer you to another agency for more appropriate support.

Being able to access information that is useful and helpful is critical. In order to make an informed decision you need to know all your options, your rights and entitlements. These will all be explained to you in the counselling session.

For a list of special pregnancy counselling and/or pregnancy support agencies see *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide. Many GPs (family doctors) also provide counselling for women with unplanned pregnancies and can offer support and help.

You will need to make an appointment (this can be arranged over the telephone or you can call into the agency in person to make an appointment). For questions about the appointment system in Ireland see the section on 'Health Services in Ireland' on page 12.

Important note: Information on abortion is **ONLY** available through a counselling session with a counsellor or doctor, and not over the telephone. Special pregnancy counselling services have been set up in Ireland to provide information on all the options available in the event of a crisis pregnancy. While all the organisations listed under **Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Agencies** in the *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide will discuss all the options with you, only agencies with an asterisk * will give you contact details for abortion clinics if requested in a counselling session.

You can also get abortion information through your local GP (family doctor). If s/he does not wish to give you the information you require, ask her/him to refer you to a GP who will.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Concerns about legal status and confidentiality may prevent some people from getting help in a crisis pregnancy. Health care services and support agencies in Ireland generally operate on a strictly confidential and non-judgmental basis. In exceptional situations the service or information provider may, under Irish legislation, be required to break this confidentiality. In the event of this happening, the counsellor will discuss any legal implications with you. This relates specifically in cases where there are:

- Allegations of child abuse or a risk of child abuse
- Where a serious crime has been committed or threatened
- If there is reason to believe an individual presents a danger to herself/himself, for example: self-harm or suicide.

It is important to give as much information as possible about your medical history and family history to health care workers, in order for them to give you the best treatment and advice, or to refer you to a relevant service and/or agency.

If you have concerns or worries about confidentiality, ask for further clarification and assurance from everyone you contact.

4. LEGAL STATUS

Legal status refers to the basis on which you reside in Ireland under immigration law. Categories include: migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants from within or outside the European Community.

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The citizen entitlement of every person born on the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 is governed by the citizenship of the person's parents at the time of the person's birth or the residency history of one of the parents prior to the birth.

A person's entitlement to services in Ireland depends on his/her legal status, his/her income and the length of time he/she is living, or is intending to live, in Ireland.

Social welfare entitlement requires a two year "habitual residence"; maternity health services generally require a one year residency.

5. DISCRIMINATION

Under Irish equality legislation:

'Discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment. A person is said to be discriminated against if s/he is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated on any of the nine grounds'.³

The nine distinct grounds are:

Gender; Marital Status; Family Status; Disability; Sexual Orientation; Age; Religion; Race; Membership of the Traveller Community.

Free advice is available from **The Equality Authority (EA)** to anyone who believes that she or he may have experienced discriminatory treatment in relation to employment or vocational training. Under the Employment Equality Act, 1998, complaints must be brought within six months of the last act of discrimination.

Racism is a specific form of discrimination and is defined as:

'Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal

footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life'.⁴

If you have been, or are being, discriminated against, you can contact the **National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

In addition, you can consult with The Equality Authority to establish if the discrimination comes under its remit. The Authority can only give general information and can only give legal advice if you are successful in applying for legal representation with them. Information publications from the Equality Authority are available in Irish, French, Portuguese and Romanian. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

6. HEALTH SERVICES IN IRELAND

In order to qualify for free medical care you need to apply for a medical card at your local health centre. There are income limits for qualifying for a medical card.

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (FORMERLY HEALTH BOARDS)

The **Health Service Executive**, through the local health centres, is the main provider of health care at local level. This includes services provided by G.P.s, public health nurses, social workers, addiction counsellors etc. However, the **Department of Social and Family Affairs** also provides funding for some counselling services (for example, marriage and child counselling).

³ Source: The Equality Authority, website: <http://www.equality.ie>

⁴ Racial discrimination as defined in Article One of the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969). Website: www.unhchr.ch

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GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GPS – FAMILY DOCTORS)

If you are a medical card holder, you are entitled to free GP services including contraceptive advice and prescriptions for contraceptive drugs and contraceptive devices. If a GP (or a pharmacist) refuses to provide this service, the local health centre must provide you with an alternative by referring you to another GP, pharmacist or family planning association (voluntary or private). Your local health centre will give you a list of GPs in your area who participate in the medical card scheme.

VOLUNTARY/PRIVATE CLINICS AND CENTRES

The voluntary and private sector in Ireland plays a vital role in the delivery of health and personal social services. A number of specialist agencies have been developed to address specific client needs, for example, in relation to family planning and pregnancy. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Q: What do maternity services consist of in Ireland?

A: Most maternity services provided are “combined services”, that is a combination of GP services and hospital services. This includes the services of a GP during pregnancy and for up to six weeks after the birth of your child and your confinement in hospital.

Q: Are maternity services free to every woman?

A: Ante-natal (pre-birth) and post-natal (after-birth) care in the public services is free to all women. In certain circumstances, and in some regions, charges are made for the services.

Q: I am an asylum seeker. I am pregnant. What am I entitled to?

A: The **Reception and Integration Agency**, which is part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, is responsible for co-ordinating the services provided to asylum seekers in Ireland. As a medical card holder, you are entitled to free ante-natal and post-natal care in Ireland.

Regardless of whether you are in Direct Provision or in receipt of a social welfare payment, you need to contact your community welfare officer in your local health centre or **The Refugee Information Service** to find out about your social welfare entitlements.

Q: I am a migrant worker. I am pregnant. My work permit will expire in two months time. My baby is due in four months time. What am I entitled to?

A: Every individual’s case is different and you need to be aware of your status options. The important question is: Is your employer willing to renew your work permit? Under Irish legislation, you cannot be dismissed for being pregnant. In order to find out the best possible option(s) for you, contact: **Access Ireland, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Refugee Asylum Service, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Q: I am a foreign student. I am pregnant. What am I entitled to?

A: In terms of support, you are entitled to free medical care before and after the birth of your child if you have been, or intend to be, living in Ireland for one year. You may also be entitled to financial support, depending on your legal status. Full-time students are not usually entitled to Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

Q: How do I apply for a medical card?

A: Get an application form and ask for a list of participating doctors from your local health centre. To get a medical card, you need to supply a residential address and nominate a doctor (from the list) you wish to provide your health care.

Health Services normally covered by a medical card include:

- Free GP (family doctor) services;
- Prescribed drugs and medicines (with some exceptions);
- Maternity & Infant care services.

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For a full list of health entitlements, further questions and eligibility for a medical card, contact the Health Service Executive at your local health centre.

Q: Do I need to make an appointment for medical services?

A: This will depend on the service or agency you contact. It is advisable to telephone to see if they have an appointment system and if they do, how to go about this. Alternatively, you can call into the service or agency to make an appointment or to ask for further information about the services they provide.

Q: Do I need to be there at the time arranged?

A: Yes, as a general rule. Most services allocate specific time periods for specific clients and if you make an appointment, it is important to attend at the time given otherwise you will not be seen and will have to make another appointment.

Q: If I can't keep an appointment?

A: If an emergency arises or you are simply unable to attend, you need to phone and cancel your appointment, in advance, if this is possible. You will also need to arrange another appointment.

Q: Can I request a female professional?

A: In most instances you will be able to request a female practitioner, for example, a female GP. It may not always be possible in hospitals, particularly at night time.

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PREGNANCY PREVENTION

Information and education on family planning services and on contraception in Ireland is provided directly by:

- Health Service Executive (formerly Health Boards)
- GPs (family doctors)/Practice Nurses
- Family Planning Clinics

It is important to decide on the method of family planning and contraception that suits you best. There are many different types of contraceptive methods and deciding the one that is best for you can be difficult. Talking to a doctor, nurse or counsellor who can explain the different methods and answer your questions will help you to decide. If you are concerned about talking to a male doctor or professional about family planning, it is important to know that family planning clinics and Well Woman centres always have female staff available to provide information and advice. Similarly, you can ask at your local health centre for a list of female GPs practising in your area.

The addresses and telephone numbers for family planning advice and information are given in the *Useful Contacts* section at the end of this Guide. Other family planning services are listed in the Golden Pages telephone directory.

Q: Why use contraceptives?

A: In order not to become pregnant. Most contraceptive methods have a very small failure rate. Careful and correct use of a contraceptive method will minimise the chances of an unplanned pregnancy.

Many crisis pregnancies occur because of misuse of the contraceptive method.

A lot of unplanned pregnancies happen in the first few months after childbirth. You can get pregnant again as early as 21 days after your baby is born.⁵

Barrier contraceptives (for example, condoms) also protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Q: What types of contraception methods are available in Ireland?

A: There are many different types of contraception methods available:

⁵ Sourced from leaflet on contraceptive use by Schering Health Care, November 2002

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1. Combined oral contraceptive pill (commonly known as 'the pill')
2. Progestogen-only pill
3. Injectable contraceptive (Depro-Provera)
4. Contraceptive implant
5. Condoms & Spermicides
6. The Diaphragm & Cap
7. The Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD/IUD/The Coil)
8. Natural family planning
9. Sterilisation (male & female)
10. Emergency contraception ('Morning After' Pill)
11. Contraceptive Patch (Evra)
12. Vaginal ring

For further information, contact your local GP or family planning clinic. **The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)** has a series of information booklets called the Black & White Guides, which have been translated into Russian, French and Romanian. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide. Ask your GP or Family Planning Clinic for information and advice on any contraceptive method you are interested in. They will help you to decide which method is best for you. You will also be told about unreliable methods and some myths about contraception.

A comprehensive list of family planning clinics is available under 'Family Planning' in the **Golden Pages** telephone directory.

Whatever contraceptive method you choose, it is only effective if it is used consistently and by carefully following the directions for its use. Many unplanned pregnancies are a result of a contraceptive method not being used correctly, that is forgetting to use (or take) contraception or by making a mistake. If this happens, you need to contact your doctor or family planning clinic *immediately*.

Q: Does the medical card cover the cost of all contraceptives?

A: The medical card will not pay for condoms

but will pay for most other contraceptive methods, for example, the pill, injectable contraception and the IUD. Ask your GP or family planning clinic if you are unsure about your contraceptive entitlements under the medical card scheme.

Q: Do I need to get a prescription for all contraceptives?

A: You can buy condoms over the counter in most pharmacies, shops, supermarkets and from vending machines in some pubs. You can also buy female condoms and spermicides over the counter in most pharmacies. For all other methods of contraception, you will need to go to a GP or a family planning clinic and get a prescription.

Q: Will I need to give personal details before I can get a prescription for the pill?

A: The pill must be prescribed by a doctor who will need to know about your medical history before issuing a prescription. S/he will want to measure your blood pressure, your weight and to ask you if you smoke. Smoking poses a variety of reproductive health risks.

Q: Is there an age restriction in obtaining contraceptives legally?

A: Condoms may be sold without prescription to a person whether under or over 17 years of age. The sale of contraceptives (other than condoms) to an unmarried person under 17 years of age is unlawful except by way of prescription. Doctors are not obliged to consult with, or obtain the consent of, the parents of a person under 17 prior to issuing such a prescription.

Q: What offers the best protection against Sexual Transmitted Infections?

A: Condoms, when and if used properly, are the most effective protection against sexually transmitted infections.

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Q: If I am on the pill and taking antibiotics, is it still effective?

A: No, generally you need to take additional precautions. Consult your GP or family planning clinic immediately. Other medication may stop the pill from working as will vomiting or severe diarrhoea. For further advice or any concerns you may have about using the pill, talk to your GP, family planning clinic or pharmacist.

Q: Is breastfeeding an effective method of contraception?

A: Breastfeeding is **NOT** a reliable method of contraception. However, the decision to breastfeed or not is very important. There are contraception methods that can be used while breastfeeding. In order to make an informed decision, talk to your GP, family planning clinic or the public health nurse in your local health centre.

Important note: Breastfeeding offers many benefits to both baby and mother. Health benefits associated with breastfed babies, for example, are to the baby's immune system, prevention of disease, decreased risk of allergies and better dental development.

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CRISIS PREGNANCY OPTIONS

If you are experiencing a crisis pregnancy (regardless of whether the pregnancy was planned or unplanned), you need to make a decision about the pregnancy which is right for you. In order for this decision to be an informed choice, you need to know all the options as they exist currently in Ireland. It is important to think through all these options and to establish what supports, financial and social, you may have with regard to the various options open to you. This will enable you to make the decision that is best for you.

Any decision you make must be the right one for you.

Your options:

1. Becoming a Parent
2. Adoption
3. Abortion

1. BECOMING A PARENT

If you decide to proceed with your pregnancy and become a parent, either on your own or with a partner, it is important to get relevant advice and information on your legal rights and social welfare entitlements. Your legal status may influence which benefits are available to you.

Relevant information you may need includes:

- Maternity/parental leave
- Financial entitlements
- Public health services
- Legal information for unmarried parents

MATERNITY LEAVE

- You are entitled to Maternity Leave no matter how recently you have started work.
- You must be in a job where you pay Social Insurance (PRSI) Contributions.
- You are entitled to attend one set of ante-natal classes without loss of pay (except the last 3 classes in a set).
- You are entitled to 18 weeks Maternity Leave.
- You can also take an additional 8 weeks Maternity Leave, but you won't get Maternity Benefit for these extra 8 weeks.

PARENTAL LEAVE

- Each parent is entitled to 14 weeks **unpaid** parental leave over 5 years, for each child up until the child is 5.

For more information on Maternity and Parental Leave contact **The Equality Authority**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

FINANCIAL ENTITLEMENTS

You must be "habitually resident" in Ireland in order to qualify for **social assistance payments**. If you have been living in the Common Travel Area for 2 years or more, have worked within the CTA and now live in Ireland and have the intention to remain in Ireland and make it your permanent home, you will satisfy the habitual residence condition. The Common Travel Area

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is Ireland, Great Britain, the Channel islands and the Isle of Man.

You must be habitually resident in Ireland to qualify for the following payments which are available from the **Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA)**:

- * Unemployment Assistance
- * Old Age Non-Contributory Pension
- * Blind Pension
- * Widow(er)'s Non-Contributory Pension and Orphan's Non-Contributory Pension
- * One-Parent Family Payment
- * Carer's Allowance
- * Disability Allowance
- * Supplementary Welfare Allowance (other than once-off exceptional and urgent needs payments)
- * Child Benefit.

EU/EEA citizens and Swiss nationals who are employed or self-employed in Ireland and subject to the Irish Social Insurance system, do not have to satisfy the habitual residence condition to qualify for Family Benefits. The following Irish social welfare payments are classified as Family Benefits under EU Regulations:

- * One-Parent Family Payment
- * Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension
- * Family Income Supplement
- * Child Benefit.

Maternity Benefit

Maternity Benefit is a payment for employed and self-employed women who are paying Pay-related Social Insurance (PRSI) and have the necessary number of contributions (at least 39 in the relevant year). As this is a social insurance payment you do not have to satisfy the habitual residence requirement in order to receive Maternity Benefit. You must be in employment when you apply for Maternity Benefit. The amount of Maternity Benefit you will receive depends on how much you are earning.

If you qualify you will receive Maternity Benefit for 18 weeks. You should apply for Maternity Benefit at least 6 weeks before your baby is due. You can get a claim form from your Social Welfare Local Office, Post Office, or from the **Maternity Benefit Section of DSFA**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is a payment for all children living in Ireland regardless of the income of the parents. However the habitual residency rule must be satisfied. Payment continues until children are 16 years old or reach their 19th birthday if they are in full-time education. The payment is paid on a monthly basis.

Application for Child Benefit is automatic when the birth of a child is registered. You do not need to apply for it.

One-Parent Family Payment (OPF)

One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) is for both men and women who are bringing up a child or children without the support of a partner. You can apply for this payment if you are unmarried, widowed, a prisoner's spouse, separated, divorced, or your marriage has been annulled and you are no longer living with your spouse. Your payment is made up of a personal rate for yourself and an extra amount for each dependant child. Your personal rate will depend on your means (that is, your income).

You qualify for this payment if you:

- Are responsible for the main care of at least one child who is living with you and is under 18 years of age, or under 22 years if in full-time education.
- Are not cohabiting, that is, living with someone as husband and wife.
- Have earnings of €293.00 or less per week.
- Satisfy a means test - this relates to any other income you have, or property (except your home), or an asset which could bring in money or provide you with an income.
- Are habitually resident in the State (see above).

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For further details on One-Parent Family Payment contact the **One-Parent Family Section of DSFA**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme (SWA)

Supplementary Welfare Allowance provides a basic weekly allowance as a right to eligible people who have little or no income. People with low incomes may also qualify for a weekly supplement payment under the scheme to meet certain special needs, for example, help with rent/mortgage interest payments. In addition, payments can also be made in respect of urgent or exceptional needs.

Basic Payments

If you have no income, you may be entitled to the basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance. If your weekly income is below the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your family size, a payment may be made to bring your income up to the appropriate Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate. If you have claimed a social welfare benefit or pension but it has not yet been paid and you have no other income, you may qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance while you are awaiting payment.

Supplements

If your income, whether from the basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance or otherwise, is too low to meet certain special needs, you may be granted a weekly supplement. Special needs may include:

- * Rent or mortgage interest payments
- * Exceptional heating expenses due to ill health. You will require a letter from your doctor before this supplement can be granted.
- * Special diet due to a medical condition such as diabetes or coeliac disease. Usually, it must be prescribed by a hospital consultant or a hospital registrar. However, in certain cases, for example, a low fat diet, the diet may be prescribed by a GP.

The amount of any supplement will be decided by the Health Service Executive depending on your circumstances.

Exceptional Needs Payments

You may be paid an Exceptional Needs Payment to assist with essential, once-off expenditure in exceptional circumstances. Expenditure of a predictable or recurring nature, such as fuel or clothing should be budgeted for out of your weekly income. There is no automatic right of entitlement to an Exceptional Needs Payment. Payment is at the discretion of the Health Service Executive, taking into account all your circumstances.

Depending on your circumstances, an Exceptional Needs Payment may be paid to assist with the cost of:

- * Bedding or other essential household equipment, such as cots, buggies, baby clothes
- * Funeral expenses
- * Other unforeseen large expenses.

Urgent Needs Payments

You may be paid an Urgent Needs Payment even if you are not normally eligible to receive assistance under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme. Payments are normally made to assist with immediate needs such as food and clothing in the aftermath of a fire or flood.

Depending on your circumstances, you may have to pay back all or part of what you have been paid, for example, if you are working or once an insurance claim has been settled.

Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance Scheme

This scheme gives assistance towards the cost of clothing and footwear for children of school-going age (up to 22 if in full-time education) and whose parents are getting a social welfare or SWA payment. The scheme operates from the beginning of June to the end of September each year.

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National Fuel Scheme

You may be eligible for a weekly allowance under the National Fuel Scheme during the winter months, subject to certain qualifying conditions. An additional weekly Smokeless Fuel Allowance is payable to help with the extra cost of smokeless fuel if you live in an area where the sale of bituminous coal is banned.

Applying for SWA

To apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance, you should contact the community welfare officer at your local health centre. S/he will be responsible for making decisions in relation to your application. Details of community welfare officer clinic times are available from the local health centre.

In order to qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance, you must:

- Be habitually resident in the State (except for “exceptional” or “urgent” needs payments)
- Have means that are insufficient to meet your needs
- Have applied for all allowances/benefits to which you may be entitled to, for example: Unemployment Assistance, One-Parent Family Payment, etc.

Normally, you will not qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance if you are working full-time or in full-time education.

Further information:

Information is available from your **Social Welfare Local Office**, on the internet: www.welfare.ie and from AERTEL, RTE’s teletext service.

Information booklets, leaflets and application forms are available from Social Welfare Local Offices, Post Offices or by telephoning the Department of Social and Family Affairs’ Leaflet Line on: LoCall 1890 20 23 25

Information on all social welfare payments and supplementary welfare allowances are available

from your local **Citizens Information Centre** (listed in the *Golden Pages*).

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Q: I am pregnant, what am I entitled to during my pregnancy?

A: If you have a medical card or have been living, or intend to live, in Ireland for at least a year, you are entitled to access ante-natal (pre-birth) care. This is medical and social care before your child is born. You are entitled to, for example:

- Maternity services
- Antenatal classes and visits
- Information about having a home birth
- Maternity leave

Q: After my baby is born, what am I/my baby entitled to?

A: Under the Maternity & Infant Care Scheme, your baby is entitled to two free visits to your GP (family doctor). The first visit is when your baby is two weeks old and the second when s/he is six weeks old.

Q: What does a public health nurse do?

A: If you have given birth to your baby in an Irish hospital, a public health nurse will visit you when you go home. You will not have to contact a public health nurse as they will contact you automatically following the birth of your child. If you have had a homebirth your midwife will have already visited you. The public health nurse is employed by the Health Service Executive and can help you with:

- Advice & support on your own health care and that of your baby
- Breastfeeding
- Feeding and diet (when your baby moves on to solid foods)
- Developmental checks
- Your baby’s vaccinations

Developmental checks can take place in your local health centre or in your home and are free of charge. These checks monitor and chart your baby’s development.

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LEGAL INFORMATION FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS

Treoir has translated legal information for unmarried parents into Arabic, Chinese, French, Romanian and Russian and is downloadable from Treoir's website www.treoir.ie/publications.

Information covered includes:

- Registering a birth
- Parenting together
- Guardianship
- Custody
- Access
- Maintenance
- Applying for a passport
- Unmarried fathers
- Child abduction.

See *Treoir/CPA Publications* page 36 for other useful publications.

2. ADOPTION

Q: What is Adoption?

A: Adoption is a legal procedure where an unmarried parent can choose to place her child with another family for life. Once an Adoption Order is finalised it cannot be revoked. All adoptions must be arranged through the Health Service Executive or an adoption agency. These agencies are registered with the **Adoption Board**. The child of married persons can only be placed for adoption in cases of abandonment.⁶

In Ireland adoption may be 'closed' or 'open'. 'Closed' adoption is where the birth and adoptive parents do not meet each other. 'Open' adoption means that there is some contact between both sets of parents. The degree of contact depends on the parents and the particular agency involved. However, whatever adoption agency or agencies you approach, they will give you information and support in making the right decision for you and your child.

The mother will be required to give her consent to the adoption by signing various documents.

The father will not be required to give his consent unless he has been appointed a guardian of the child. If he has not been appointed a guardian, he has the right to be consulted about the adoption, but this does not mean that his consent is required.

If you are considering adoption as an option, the adoption agencies and pregnancy counselling services listed in *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide will give you further information.

Important note: If you decide to choose adoption as an option, it is very important to keep in contact with the adoption agency throughout the full process, that is, until the final adoption order has been signed. This is usually a number of months after the child has been placed with the adoptive family. If you have any concerns about your legal status, a special application can be made to the **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform** in relation to extending your visa until the adoption process has been completed. The adoption agency will give you further information about how to do this or you can contact the Department directly. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Q: What is an Adoption Order?

A: An adoption order secures in law the position of the child in the adoptive family. On the making of the adoption order the parent loses all legal rights over the child and is freed from all duties. These rights and duties are transferred to the adoptive parents. The child is regarded in law as the child of the adoptive parents as if s/he were born to them in marriage. Legal adoption is permanent.

Q: What can I do if I am thinking about adoption as an option?

A: There are many adoption agencies in Ireland which provide confidential information. The **Adoption Board** will also give you information

⁶ Source: Adoption Board Website: <http://www.adoptionboard.ie>

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on the adoption procedure in Ireland. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide for a list of adoption agencies. The Health Service Executive also provides adoption services. Social workers in maternity and general hospitals can give you information and support as well.

Q: Will I know where my child is going to be placed?

A: No. Generally addresses are not exchanged. Meetings in 'open' adoptions between parents usually take place in a neutral place.

Q: Will my child be brought up aware of his or her culture?

A: Adoption agencies try to place an adopted child with a family who will bring the child up aware of the cultural background of their birth mother and/or father. This also relates to religion – as a parent you are entitled to know the religion of the adopting parents before and when you give consent to your child's adoption.

Important note: It is important to remember that all adoption agencies operate on a strictly confidential basis.

For more information contact the Adoption Board. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

3. ABORTION

Q: What is abortion?

A: Abortion, or termination, is the ending of a pregnancy through a surgical procedure.

As stated in 'The law on abortion information' (government website: <http://www.oasis.gov.ie>): 'Abortion is illegal in Ireland except where there is a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother including a risk arising from a threat of suicide. Women may not be prevented from travelling abroad to get an abortion. It is lawful to provide information in Ireland about abortions abroad, subject to strict conditions

(for example in a pregnancy counselling session and not over the phone). It is not lawful to encourage or advocate an abortion in individual cases.'

Women in Ireland who decide to have an abortion have to travel to another country where abortion is legal. Most Irish women travel to England because it is the closest country. Because the abortion is in a private clinic in England, it must be paid for privately. There is no medical card cover or any other government payment to cover the cost of an abortion service or travel expenses.

For some non-Irish women, travelling for an abortion can be difficult and will depend on visa status. Subject to the conditions of your visa, you may have to get special permission to leave Ireland and return. If a woman needs permission to travel, she will need to provide the following to the Visa Office, Immigration and Citizens Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:

- a letter from either the counselling service she has attended or her G.P. and
- a letter from the clinic in England (or wherever the abortion is to take place) confirming an appointment has been made.

The agencies listed in *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide may be able to assist with this. Some doctors, counsellors and specific agencies give information about abortion abroad in a counselling session, while some do not. However all will offer counselling on all crisis pregnancy options.

Agencies indicated with an asterisk * in *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide will give contact details for abortion clinics during a face to face pregnancy counselling session.

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RELATED HEALTH MATTERS

1. Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture
2. Domestic Violence
3. Female Genital Mutilation
4. Harassment
5. HIV Positive Mother
6. Male Circumcision
7. Miscarriage, Still Birth and Sudden Infant Death
8. Rape
9. Sexually Transmitted Infections

1. CENTRE FOR THE CARE OF SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

The Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture is a non-profit humanitarian organisation that works with the survivors of torture to engage in a healing process to achieve their full potential whatever their ethnic origin, gender, religious or political background in the common goal of the prevention of torture worldwide.⁷

Set up in 2001, the Centre offers a range of specialised services (medical, counselling, legal, etc.). The Centre will make referrals to other agencies where appropriate and required. Clients come from refugee and asylum-seeking communities in Ireland.

For further information, contact the **Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

2. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Violence within a family or personal relationships, such as marriage, is a crime and in Ireland is commonly called 'domestic violence'. The Domestic Violence Act (1996) provides for the protection, safety and welfare of married people, cohabiting couples, parents, children and others living in a domestic relationship. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual or psychological (mental) violence.

A leaflet entitled, '*Protection from Domestic Violence*' is available from the **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

⁷ Source: CCST Mission statement as taken from their website.

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3. FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision (as it is sometimes known) is illegal in Ireland. Women who have been circumcised have very specific health needs, for example: medical, gynaecological and obstetric. In relation to pregnancy, FGM (in more severe forms) can have complications and severe consequences in childbirth delivery.

If you would like to talk to someone in confidence about this issue, contact **Comhlamh**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

4. HARASSMENT

A person is guilty of harassment if s/he harasses you by

- persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with you, and
- intentionally or recklessly seriously interfering with your peace and privacy, or
- causing alarm, distressing or harming you.

To take an action for harassment known as 'Breach of the Peace' go to the local District Court and ask for the court clerk. In Dublin go to the **Summons Office**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

5. HIV POSITIVE MOTHER

HIV testing and clinical services for individuals with AIDS have been developed in Ireland since 1985. In clinical practice, routine screening for the HIV virus is offered to **all** pregnant women when they attend an antenatal clinic.

Confidentiality, non-judgemental attitudes and clear information are central in the health care given to HIV positive women in Ireland.

For HIV positive mothers, it is critical to know that the HIV virus can be transmitted through breastfeeding. Therefore, breastfeeding is not recommended if you are HIV positive.

For more information contact your local family planning clinic, well woman clinic, GP or public health nurse in your local health centre. You can also contact **Cairde**, an organisation based in Dublin which actively supports HIV positive people and their families. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

6. MALE CIRCUMCISION

Male circumcision is not illegal in Ireland and can be arranged with the help of healthcare professionals. You can talk to your public health nurse, midwife, GP, local health centre and/or children's hospital about male circumcision before or after the birth of your baby. A circumcision that is performed by a non-medical person in unsafe conditions (that is a place without medical support) will put a baby's life in danger and is illegal. It is important that circumcision is performed only by licensed medical professionals.

7. MISCARRIAGE, STILL BIRTH AND SUDDEN INFANT DEATH

If you have experienced a miscarriage, still birth or sudden infant death, you can get help through bereavement counselling, childbirth counselling and/or information on how to register a death from **The Miscarriage Association of Ireland, Irish Still Birth and Neonatal Death Society and/or Irish Sudden Infant Death Association**. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

8. RAPE

Rape is a crime in Ireland regardless of the relationship between the individuals involved. Irish legislation recognises rape within marriage, by a partner, boyfriend, family member or friend to be a crime. Under the Civil Legal Aid Act, free legal advice is available

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in cases of serious sexual assault. Contact the **Legal Aid Board**.

Rape crisis centres provide free, confidential counselling services for women and men who have been raped and/or sexually abused at any time in their lives, or for anyone who wants to talk about sexual violence. The **Dublin Rape Crisis Centre** operates a free 24 hour telephone helpline (with trained counsellors) seven days a week at **1800 77 88 88**. They can also give you the telephone numbers for the other rape crisis centres around the country. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

9. SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

It is extremely important to contact a health professional or service if you are pregnant and have been exposed (or think you may have been) to a sexually transmitted infection. You need to do this immediately in order to get treatment and support as soon as possible. Health care and social support for migrant and ethnic minority individuals with HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are run in compliance with international conventions. Everyone in Ireland is 'eligible for such treatment as is available and appropriate for his or her illness, free of charge where necessary'.⁸ All migrants, regardless of their residential status, are entitled to access treatment and support for HIV/AIDS and STIs. Concern and worry about your legal status or the confidentiality of services may prevent you from seeking assistance. Be assured of the utmost confidentiality of all the services.

The Irish Family Planning Association's information booklet (**the Black & White Guide to Sexually Transmitted Infections**) is available in English, French, Romanian and Russian. For copies of this and other information guides, contact the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA). You can also contact the Well Woman clinics for information and counselling services.

See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

Additionally, most main hospitals have Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM clinics) where sexually transmitted infections are diagnosed and treated in a strictly confidential way. For example, although the two GUM clinics in Dublin ask for a patient's name and address, the service is completely confidential. See *Useful Contacts* at the end of this Guide.

⁸ Source: Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan in 'AIDS & Drugs Service of the Eastern Health Board'.

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USEFUL CONTACTS

In an emergency call 112. You will not be charged for using this number and the operator will immediately alert the relevant emergency services (ambulance, fire department, police (Gardai), coast guard and mountain rescue).

TREOIR

National Information Centre for Unmarried Parents

National Resource Centre for those Working with Young Parents

14 Gandon House
Custom House Square
IFSC

Dublin 1

LoCall: 1890 252 084

Tel: 01 6700 120

Email: info@treoir.ie

Website: www.treoir.ie

Through the free and confidential **National Information Centre** Treoir provides information on legal issues, social welfare entitlements and other issues affecting unmarried parents. *See a list of Treoir publications on page 36.*

A National Data Base of Useful Services is available on the website

PREGNANCY COUNSELLING AGENCIES

* Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Counselling and Support Service

Marina House
Portiuncula Hospital
Ballinasloe
Co. Galway

LoCall: 1850 200 600

Tel: 090 964 8190

Monday to Friday 9 - 5

Email: ballinasloecps@mailn.hse.ie

Website: www.whb.ie/ourservices

* Services indicated with an asterisk will give contact details for abortion clinics during a face-to-face counselling session.

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CURA

Available in 17 centres around the country

Callsave: 1850 622626
Monday to Friday 9.30 – 9 Saturday 10 – 5
Email: cura@iol.ie
Website: www.cura.ie

* Dublin Well Woman Centre

35 Lower Liffey Street Tel: 01 872 8051
Ballsbridge Tel: 01 660 9860
Coolock Tel: 01 848 4511

Monday to Friday 9 – 7.30. Saturday 10 – 4.

Email: info@wellwomancentre.ie
Website: www.wellwomancentre.ie/

* Irish Family Planning Association

Available in 8 centres around the country

Callsave: 1850 49 50 51
Monday to Friday: 9 – 5
Email: post@ifpa.ie
Website: www.ifpa.ie

LIFE Pregnancy Care Service

Available in 6 centres around the country

Callsave: 1850 281281
Monday to Sunday 9 – 9
Email: life@life.ie
Website: www.life.ie

* Mayo Crisis Pregnancy Support Services

Mayo General Hospital

Castlebar

Co Mayo

LoCall: 1890 20 00 22

Monday to Friday 9.30 – 5.

* Midlands Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service (CPCS)

Available in 6 centres in the Midlands area

Health Service Executive

Midlands Region

Regional Children & Family Services

Arden Road

Tullamore

Co.Offaly

Freephone: 1800 200 857

Tel: 0506 263 70

Monday to Friday 9.30 – 1. 2 – 3.30.

Email: crisispregnancy.counselling@mailq.hse.ie

* One Family

Cherish House

2 Lower Pembroke Street

Dublin 2

LoCall: 1890 662 212

Tel: 01 662 9212

Monday to Friday 9-5

Email: info@onefamily.ie

Website: www.onefamily.ie

* PACT

15 Belgrave Road

Rathmines

Dublin 6

Callsave: 1850 673333

Monday to Friday 10.30 – 4

Email: pact@eircom.net

Website: www.pact.ie

Crisis Pregnancy Agency website

www.positiveoptions.ie

Positive Options is a directory of agencies skilled in the area of crisis pregnancy. For details visit www.positiveoptions.ie or Freetext LIST to 50444.

* Services indicated with an asterisk will give contact details for abortion clinics during a face-to-face counselling session.

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ORGANISATIONS FOR MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES

Access Ireland

Cultural Mediation Programme and Refugee Women's Programme
40-41 Dominick Street Lower
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 878 0589

Email: accessireland@connect.ie

Afghan Community of Ireland Association

20 Ashington Gardens
Off Navan Road
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 868 3577

Email: afgcommunity@hotmail.com

Website: www.nasruddinsaljoqi.tripod.com

Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture

213 North Circular Road
Phibsboro
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 838 9664

Email: info@ccst.ie or mike@ccst.ie

Website: www.ccst.ie

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

72-76 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 602 8202

Website: www.justice.ie

Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform Reception and Integration Agency

Block C, Ardilaun Centre
112-114 St Stephen's Green West
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 418 3200

Responsible for co-ordinating services provided for asylum seekers in Ireland. Works in partnership with other state agencies, voluntary and community groups, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Emigrant Advice and Counselling Service

1a Cathedral Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 873 2844

Immigrant Council of Ireland (status/welfare enquiries)

2 St. Andrew Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 645 8046

Email: info@immigrantcouncil.ie

Website: www.immigrantcouncil.ie

NASC

Irish Immigrant Support Centre
St. Mary's of the Isle
Sharman Crawford Street
Cork

Tel: 021 431 7411

Irish Chinese Information Centre

57 Smithfield Square
(Opposite Chief O'Neill's Hotel)
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 7312

Irish Refugee Council (policy and legal issues)

40 Lower Dominic Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 873 0042

1 Bank Place
Ennis
Co. Clare

Tel: 065 6822 026

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

55 Parnell Square
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 889 7570

Email: info@mrci.ie

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National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

Third Floor
Jervis House
Jervis Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 478 5777
Email: nccri@eircom.net
Website: www.nccri.com

Refugee Information Service (legal and welfare information)

27 Annamoe Terrace
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 838 2740
(Clinics in Dublin are in Blanchardstown, Green Street, Manor Street, Rathmines, Rialto and Tallaght).

Refugee Legal Service (asylum seekers)

48/49 North Brunswick Street
Georges Lane
Smithfield
Dublin 7

Freephone: 1800 238 243
Tel: 01 646 9600

SPIRASI (health information, support and educational courses)

Spiritan House
213 North Circular Road
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 838 9664

Unaccompanied Minors

Social Work Service
Baggot Street Hospital
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 668 1577

Vincentian Refugee Project (support with accommodation etc.)

St. Peter's Church
Phibsborough
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 810 2580

MATERNITY HOSPITALS

Medical social workers are available in most large maternity hospitals and can provide information and counselling. Maternity hospitals can arrange for translators to be brought into the hospital or can arrange a translation service over the telephone. Maternity hospitals, throughout Ireland, can be found in the local telephone directory under "Hospitals".

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (REGIONAL OFFICES)

HSE Western Region
Merlin Park Regional Hospital
Galway
Tel: 091 751 131

HSE Dublin/Mid-Leinster Region
Arden Road
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 21 868

HSE Dublin/North Eastern Region
Dublin Road
Kells
Co Meath
Tel: 046 928 0500

HSE Southern Region
Cork Farm Centre
Wilton
Cork
Tel: 021 454 5011

FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

Cork Family Planning Centre
23 Tuckey Street
Cork
Telephone: 021 4277906

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Dublin Well Woman Centre

35 Lower Liffey Street Tel: 01 872 8051
Ballsbridge Tel: 01 660 9860
Coolock Tel: 01 848 4511
Monday to Friday 9 – 7.30. Saturday 10 – 4.
Email: info@wellwomancentre.ie
Website: www.wellwomancentre.ie/

Galway Family Planning Clinic

Augustine Street
Galway
Tel: 091 562 992

Irish Family Planning Association

Available in 8 centres around the country
Callsave: 1850 49 50 51
Monday to Friday: 9 - 5
Email: post@ifpa.ie
Website: www.ifpa.ie
The IFPA has a medical card scheme in place

Letterkenny Women's Centre

Port Road
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 912 4985

Limerick Family Planning Clinic

27 Mallow Street
Limerick
Tel: 061 312 026

Tralee Family Planning and Women's Health Clinic

29 Ashe Street
Tralee
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 712 5322

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Child Benefit Section

Social Welfare Services Office
St Oliver Plunkett Road
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal
LoCall: 1890 400 400
Tel: 01 874 8444 or 074 25 566

Information Service

Store Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 704 3000
Website: www.welfare.ie

Maternity Benefit Section

Social Welfare Services Office
Oliver Plunkett Road
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
LoCall: 1890 690 690
Tel: 704 3475 or 043 - 45 211 extn 8753 or 043 - 40 080

One-Parent Family Section

Pension Services Office
College Road
Sligo
LoCall: 1890 500 000
Tel: 071 9148376

Information booklets, leaflets and application forms are available

- From your Social Welfare Local Office
- On the internet at www.welfare.ie or
- By telephoning the Department's Leaflet Line at LoCall 1890 202335

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ADOPTION AGENCIES

The Health Service Executive (see p30) provides adoption services. In addition the following agencies provide adoption services.

CUNAMH

CPRSI House
30 South Anne Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 677 9664

PACT

Support & counselling for unplanned pregnancy
15 Belgrave Road
Rathmines
Dublin 6

Tel: 01 497 6788

St Catherine's Adoption Society

Clarecare, Harmony Row
Ennis
Co. Clare

Tel: 065 682 8178

St Mura's Adoption Society

The Pastoral Centre
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal

Tel: 074 21 853

OTHER ADOPTION AGENCIES

The Adoption Board

Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

Tel: 01 667 1392

Website: www.adoptionboard.ie

Barnardo's Adoption Advice Service

Christchurch Square
Dublin 8

Tel: 01 454 6388

Tuesdays: 2 - 5 Thursdays: 10 - 2

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Cairde Healthwise Project

19 Belvedere Place
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 855 2113

Email: info@cairdre.ie

Website: www.cairde.ie

Dublin AIDS Alliance

Tel: 01 873 3799

Dublin Well Woman

35 Lower Liffey Street Tel: 01 872 8051

Ballsbridge Tel: 01 660 9860

Coolock Tel: 01 848 4511

Monday to Friday 9 - 7.30. Saturday 10 - 4.

Email: info@wellwomancentre.ie

Website: www.wellwomancentre.ie

Drugs/HIV Helpline

Tel: 1800 459 459

General Public HIV Testing

Baggot Street Clinic
Haddington Road
Dublin 4

Tel: 1800 201 187

Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinic

St James's Hospital
James's Street
Dublin 8

Tel: 01 416 2315/6

Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)

5 - 7 Cathal Brugha Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 872 7088

Website: www.ifpa.ie

Level 3
The Square
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Tel: 01 459 7685

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Mater Misericordiae Hospital

Infectious Disease Clinic
Outpatients Department,
North Circular Road,
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 803 2063

Clinics are available in local/regional hospitals in Castlebar, Cork, Galway, Ennis, Limerick, Nenagh, Sligo, Waterford.

Useful websites for information on women's health and sexual health:

Think Contraception: www.thinkcontraception.ie

Brook Advisory Centres: www.brook.org.uk

Cool Sex Information: www.coolsexinfo.org.uk

Family Planning Association: www.fpa.org.uk

HSE Dublin North Eastern Region Youth Health Information: www.youthhealthne.ie

HSE Dublin North Eastern Region Women's Health: www.nehb.ie/womenshealth

Sheffield Centre for Sexual Health:
www.sexualhealthsheffield.co.uk

Terence Higgins Trust: www.tht.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL ADDRESSES

Comhairle supports the national network of Citizens Information Centres which provide a confidential free information service. Many also provide legal clinics.

For details of your local Citizens Information Centre, check 'Golden Pages' or contact Comhairle at 01 605 9000.

Comhairle's Oasis database at www.oasis.gov.ie provides information on life events, such as having a baby, marriage, death, health services, social welfare entitlements etc.

Comhlamh (Association of Returned Development Workers)

10 Upper Camden Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 478 34900

Email: info@comhlamh.org

Website: www.comhlamh.org

Also at:
55 Grand Parade
Cork

Tel: 021 275 881

Email: comhcork@iol.ie

Community Relations Section

Garda Headquarters
Harcourt Square
Harcourt Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 666 3150/01 666 3817

Email: agecard@iol.ie

Website: www.garda.ie

Dochas For Women

Old Station House
North Road
Monaghan

Tel: 047 30 768

Dochas offers counselling, information, support and education programmes. Services are also open to men.

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

70 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2

Freephone: 1 800 77 88 88

Tel: 01 661 4911

Email: rcc@indigo.ie

Website: www.drcc.ie

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FLAC

(Free Legal Advice Centres)
13 Lower Dorset Street
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 679 4239
Email: info@flac.ie
Website: www.flac.ie

General Register Office

Joyce House
8-11 Lombard Street East,
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 635 4000
Website: www.groireland.ie

Responsible for registration of births, deaths and marriages. For local offices, see local telephone directories.

Gingerbread Ireland

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 873 8702
Email: info@gingerbread.ie
Website: www.gingerbread.ie

Irish Still Birth and Neo Natal Death Society

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 6996

Irish Sudden Infant Death Association

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 873 2711

Legal Aid Board

(Head Office)
Quay Street
Caherciveen
Co.Kerry

Tel: 066 947 1000

St Stephen's Green House
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 240 0900
Website: www.legalaidboard.ie

Miscarriage Association of Ireland

Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 2914

One Family

Cherish House
2 Lower Pembroke Street
Dublin 2

National Helpline: 1890 662 212
Tel: 01 662 9212
Email: info@onefamily.ie
Website: www.onefamily.ie

One Family offers free information, support and training programmes, counselling on all options in crisis pregnancy and counselling for adults in one parent families. All services are supported by free on-site childcare.

Parent Support Programme Limerick

Social Services Centre
Henry Street
Limerick

Tel: 061 411 643/061 314 111
Email: npsqmidwest@eircom.net

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Passport Office

Department of Foreign Affairs
Setana House
Molesworth Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 671 1633

Website: www.gov.ie/iveagh/

Summons Office

Aras Ui Dhalaigh
Inns Quay
Dublin 7

Tel: 888 6117 / 8

The Equality Authority

Clonmel Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 1890 245 545

Email: info@equality.ie

Website: www.equality.ie

Visa Office

Immigration & Citizens Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
13/14 Burgh Quay
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 663 1000

Women's Aid

Everton House
47 Old Cabra Road
Dublin 7

Helpline: 1800 34 19 00

Tel: 01 868 4721

Email: info@womensaid.ie

Website: www.womensaid.ie

Women's Health Project

Baggot Street
19 Haddington Road
Dublin 4

Tel: 1800 201187

(For women working in prostitution)

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PUBLICATIONS

TREOIR Publications

"Being There for Them" - a booklet for grandparents of children whose parents are not married to each other

Bulletin information for unmarried parents and those involved with them - send us your name and address

Family Links: steps and stages - shared parenting and step-families €5

Information for Young Parents in Education

Information Pack for Unmarried Parents

Newsletter for workers with young parents - send us your name and address

Resource Pack for Workers with Young Parents

Taking the Stand - a guide for unmarried parents resolving disputes regarding care of their children €5

Work it Out! - a guide for parents on One-Parent Family Payment (re)entering the workforce or education

Information Leaflets

1. *The Children Act 1997 (guardianship by agreement)*
2. *The Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 (harassment)*
3. *Guardianship, access, custody*
4. *Shared parenting*
5. *Rights of unmarried fathers*
6. *Maintenance*
7. *Family adoption (mothers and husbands)*
8. *Passport applications*
9. *Ante/post natal accommodation*
10. *Birth registration*

11. *Cohabitation*

12. *Unmarried parents and equality legislation*

All publications can be downloaded from our website www.treoir.ie/publications.

WEB based information

Legal information for unmarried parents

Treoir has translated legal information for unmarried parents into Arabic, Chinese, French, Romanian and Russian and is downloadable from Treoir's website www.treoir.ie/publications.

Information covered includes:

- Registering a birth
- Parenting together
- Guardianship
- Custody
- Access
- Maintenance
- Applying for a passport
- Unmarried Fathers
- Child abduction.

This resource is not available as a printed publication.

Useful services database

Pregnant and Thinking about Adoption?

Unmarried Parents - not just a single issue

CPA Publications

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency produces a range of research publications and information materials. Details of these are available from the Agency website www.crisispregnancy.ie

Additional Agency websites are www.positiveoptions.ie and www.thinkcontraception.ie