

for provision from the net estate of the deceased within six months after the probate or administration is first granted. It is not necessary to show financial dependence if your partner dies during the relationship. An order under this section shall not affect the legal rights of a surviving spouse or civil partner. Principal Residence Relief allows an individual to receive a gift or inheritance of a residential property free from capital acquisitions tax (CAT), popularly known as inheritance tax or gift tax, if the following conditions are met:

- The premises is/was the beneficiary's principal private residence for three years prior to the gift or inheritance
- The individual has no beneficial interest in any other residential property in the State
- The individual remains living in the property for six years after the gift or inheritance. This does not apply if you are over 55 years of age.

### Cohabitants' Agreements

Cohabitants can make a Cohabitants' Agreement to regulate their financial affairs. The agreement can include a full or partial opt out of the Redress Scheme. Both cohabitants must get independent legal advice before making an agreement. This agreement will be recognised as valid and enforceable unless, in exceptional circumstances, a court rules that putting it into effect would cause serious injustice. An order under this section shall not affect the legal rights of a surviving spouse or civil partner.

### Social Welfare

Cohabitants are treated in the same way as married families for social welfare purposes. Both incomes will be taken into account when assessing income for the means test. However, cohabitants do not qualify for the Widowed or Surviving Civil Partner Grant.

### Income Tax

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

### Qualified Informant

A cohabitant is a qualified informant for the purposes of signing the register in relation to the death of their cohabiting partner.

**For information in relation to Domestic Violence and more - see 'Cohabiting Parents' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).**

#### Useful Contacts:

**The Legal Aid Board: LoCall 1890 615 200 / [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)**

**Free Legal Advice Centres: 01 874 5690 / [www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)**

**GLEN: 01 672 8560 / [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)**

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While every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this leaflet is accurate, no responsibility can be accepted by Treoir for any error or omission.

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# Cohabiting Parents

## Opposite and Same Sex



### NOTE:

This leaflet has been updated with sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, commenced 18/1/2016.

## Cohabiting Parents

### Who are cohabitants?

Cohabitants are two opposite or same sex adults who are:

- living together in an intimate and committed relationship
- not married to each other
- not in a registered civil partnership
- not related to each other.

## Children of cohabiting parents

Children of cohabiting parents have the same succession and maintenance rights as children born to married parents.

### Mothers

An unmarried mother has automatic guardianship rights in respect of her child. See 'guardianship' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).

### Fathers

An unmarried father does not have automatic legal rights in relation to his child. This applies even where the father has his name on his child's birth certificate. However, a father who is cohabiting, or has cohabited, with the mother continuously for 12 months and at least 3 of these months are after the birth of the child, will automatically become the guardian of his child. Guardianship will only be acquired automatically where the parents live together for at least 12 months after the 18th January 2016, the date on which the relevant legislation was commenced. See 'unmarried fathers' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).

## Redress Scheme

The Redress Scheme is a legal safety net for **qualified cohabitants** in long-term relationships who may otherwise be very vulnerable financially at the end of their relationship. The Redress Scheme only applies to cohabitants whose relationship ends on or after 1st January 2011. You can apply to court for compensatory maintenance, pension adjustment, property adjustment orders or provision from the estate of a deceased cohabitant (in that order). See below.

### Who is a qualified cohabitant?

You are a qualified cohabitant if you have been cohabiting:

- for at least 5 years, or 2 years if you have a child with your partner, **and**
- are financially dependent on the other cohabitant.

Where one of the cohabitants is still married, neither of the cohabitants will be considered a qualified cohabitant unless the married cohabitant has lived apart from his/her spouse for at least 4 of the previous 5 years.

## Maintenance

**For cohabitants:** If a cohabiting relationship comes to an end, neither cohabitant has a responsibility to provide financially in respect of each other. However, if you are a **qualified cohabitant** and can show the court at the end of your relationship that you are **financially dependent** on your ex-partner, you can apply for a **Compensatory Maintenance Order**, which is an order for regular maintenance or a lump sum. The court order will no longer apply if the qualified cohabitant, in whose favour the maintenance is paid, goes on to marry. See 'Cohabiting Parents' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).

**For children:** Both parents have a responsibility to provide financially for their child up to the child's 18th birthday or up to age 23 if the child is in full-time education. Where maintenance is not being paid, either parent may apply to the court for a maintenance order against the other parent in respect of a dependent child. Where a parent or a person who has the day-to-day care of a child (in loco parentis) is in a cohabiting relationship with someone other than the parent of the child and that relationship comes to an end, he/she can seek maintenance for the child (through the court) from his/her former cohabitant. This only applies where the former cohabitant is a guardian of the child. If ordered to pay maintenance the order will remain in place up until the child's 18th birthday (unless the court orders otherwise). See 'maintenance' at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).

## Pension adjustment

Check your pension scheme to see if it is possible to name your partner as a beneficiary. If you are a **qualified cohabitant** and can show the court at the end of your relationship that you are **financially dependent** on your ex-partner you can apply for a Pension Adjustment Order which is an order for a payment from the other cohabitant's pension scheme.

## Property

Cohabiting families do not have the benefit of the Family Home Protection Act 1976 which applies only to married families. A property owned by one parent only and being used as a family home can be sold without the consent of the other parent. If purchasing a property jointly, consider checking with a solicitor whether Joint Tenancy or Tenancy in Common is the best ownership option as regards the property. If you are a **qualified cohabitant** and can show the court at the end of your relationship that you are **financially dependent** on your ex-partner you can apply for a Property Adjustment Order - an order which transfers or settles a property from one cohabitant to another.

## Inheritance

Cohabiting partners do not have automatic inheritance rights from each other. Cohabiting partners pay tax at 33% on gifts/inheritance over €15,075. Children of cohabiting parents have the same succession rights as children born to married parents, i.e. they can receive gifts and inheritance from a parent up to a maximum of €280,000 tax free. If you are a **qualified cohabitant** you can apply