

treoir

information for unmarried parents

# Being there for them

A booklet for grandparents of children  
whose parents are not married to each other

Lo-Call

1890 252 084



2011

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

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

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

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

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Treoir is the Irish word for direction or guidance. We chose this word as a title for our organisation as we give clear and up-to-date information free of charge to parents who are not married to each other and those involved with them.

Treoir can give you information on:

Social Welfare entitlements

Registering the birth of your baby

Legal issues

The importance of both parents in the lives of their children

Grandparents' rights

And lots more...

Treoir has information for parents who are not married to each other  
- whether living together or not.



**Treoir** is a membership organisation which promotes the rights and welfare of unmarried parents and their children in Ireland.

### Treoir

National Information Service  
for parents who are not married to each other  
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IFSC, Dublin 1  
LoCall 1890 252084  
E-mail: [info@treoir.ie](mailto:info@treoir.ie)  
[www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

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and



# Being a Grandparent

Special relationships can exist between grandchildren and grandparents, which bring much joy and fulfilment to both. Grandparents can offer an informal yet very stable sense of security and many new parents would be lost without the support and advice of an experienced grandparent.

Grandparents can play a key role in family life. They have an important store of family history as well as local, historic and social knowledge, which help grandchildren know where they fit into the family and community. They can have a very positive influence on their grandchildren and can also be a stabilising force in the lives of their grandchildren.

Grandparents provide support for parents in a number of ways, including child care, financial and emotional support, as well as being a source of parenting advice. In a report from the Growing Up in Ireland study published in 2011, 89% of mothers were in regular contact with their own parents. 80% of grandparents babysat for their grandchildren and over half took their grandchild out. Nearly 40% had their grandchildren stay overnight. 72% of parents felt they got enough support from grandparents and friends, but there were 15% who did not get enough help or got no help at all. Parents of lone parents were the most supportive of all.

**This booklet is for all grandparents of children whose parents are not married to each other. However, it is particularly for grandparents who:**

- have their adult children and their grandchildren living with them.
- are grandparents of children whose parents are in their teens.
- are providing full-time care to their grandchildren.
- are grandparents who are not in touch with their grandchildren.

In these situations some difficulties may arise. We hope therefore that in these cases this booklet will offer some support and be useful.

Whatever their role, whatever the circumstances, the most commonly used phrase by grandparents who were consulted in the preparation of this booklet was "being there for them". This reflects their wholehearted wish to do their best for their grandchildren and their adult children.

## A word about children: their rights and needs



**What all children need from the adults in their lives - parents and grandparents - is to be cherished, loved unconditionally, respected, and, of course, to have fun. Their emotional and physical development depends on security and stability in their lives.**

All children have two parents and ideally it is good for children to know who both their parents are. It is important for them to develop a strong sense of identity and family history - who they are and where they come from - which will help to ensure a real sense of belonging and place in the world. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (which Ireland has ratified) recognises this right of all children to preserve their identities.

If at all possible it is good for children to have a personal relationship and direct contact with both their parents. However, this option may not always be possible — for example if the father's unknown. It may also arise where there is violence or abuse in the family.

Try to be positive and supportive to the parents of your grandchild. Above all don't be negative about either parent to your grandchild. You are hurting your grandchild most of all by this. It is important that children have as positive an image as possible of both their parents. This helps your grandchild's self-esteem and sense of family identity.

**Family Links — steps and stages** (which is aimed at helping children to understand their family situation where their parents are not living together) is available from Treoir and may help you. See [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or phone **1890 252 084**.

# Legal rights of unmarried parents

## Guardianship

Guardianship is the collection of rights and duties which a parent has in respect of her/his child. It includes the right to maintain and properly care for the child. It also includes the right to make decisions about a child's religious and secular education, health requirements, passport applications and other matters affecting the welfare of the child.

When a baby is born to a woman who is not married to the baby's father she automatically has sole guardianship and sole custody of her child even if she is under 18.

A father who is not married to the child's mother is not automatically a guardian of his child. He must take action to become a guardian. The father can become a joint guardian with the mother if she agrees to this by both of them signing Statutory Instrument S.I. No 5 of 1998. This form is available from Treoir. If the mother does not agree, the father can apply to the local district court to become a guardian. **A father does not get any legal guardianship rights from his name being on his child's birth certificate.**

## Access/ Custody

Access is having contact with a child if the child is not living with the parent. Custody is having the physical day-to-day care of a child.

A father can apply for access, custody or joint custody to the local district court if he is being denied access or custody.

## Maintenance

Maintenance is the legal right of a child to be financially maintained by both parents.

A mother can apply to the local district court for maintenance from the father if the parents cannot agree it between themselves.

## Other Issues

There are other issues which may arise including birth registration, establishing paternity, passports etc. For more information see [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or call **LoCall 1890 252 084** to talk to an information officer. However, before going to court it can be useful for the parents to try mediation or collaborative law as an alternative to going to court.

## Mediation

Mediation is where a third party helps parents reach an agreement. It encourages parents to co-operate with each other in working out arrangements concerning their children. Any written agreement made can be made a rule of court.

**The Family Mediation Service: 01-6344320, [www.fsa.ie](http://www.fsa.ie)**

**Mediators Institute of Ireland: 01-2847121, [www.themii.ie](http://www.themii.ie)**

## Collaborative Law

Collaborative law is where parents work with specially trained lawyers, receive legal advice and guidance, and together with the lawyers, discuss and resolve issues through face-to-face meetings. All decisions are made by the parents. Any written agreement made can be made a rule of court.

**Association of Collaborative Practitioners: [www.acp.ie](http://www.acp.ie)**

## Grandparents and their adult child's unexpected pregnancy

An unexpected pregnancy can initially be a shock causing much confusion and concern for all. Undoubtedly there are particular concerns for you if your daughter or son's partner is pregnant. You may be anxious about the education or future of your daughter or son and/or his partner. You might be disappointed and have fears that their life chances will be reduced.

It is important to let your daughter/son arrive at her/his own decision regarding the pregnancy. Encourage them to attend one of the free pregnancy counselling services (see page 19). These services also offer free, non-judgemental advice, support and counselling to grandparents.

### Think about:

- How best to support your daughter/son in their decision-making without actually making decisions for them.
- Being available to your daughter/son if they want to discuss their choices and the implications of these choices.
- Contacting one of the services listed at the back of this booklet if your daughter/son makes a decision you have difficulty with and you feel you need support and counselling.
- Encouraging your daughter to access early medical care and both of them to get information on legal rights for unmarried parents and what benefits they might be entitled to.
- What you are prepared to offer and what you are not prepared to do once the baby is born. This does not mean you are not being supportive. Make this clear to your daughter/son so they know what to expect.

**Remember  
you are not  
alone in this  
situation**



## Grandparents and informal and occasional child-minding

For many grandparents their involvement with their grandchildren is a natural extension of their family life, looking after them in an informal way, offering to 'mind' grandchildren on a regular or occasional basis and generally helping out the parents. For grandparents there is the joy of having their grandchildren knowing that at the end of the day they can be handed back to mammy or daddy.

This informal arrangement provides grandparents and grandchildren with the opportunity of getting to know each other and developing a close relationship which is good all round. Knowing that grandparents are there for them strengthens their family links and sense of belonging.

Some grandparents give generously of their time and money. Others become over-involved with caregiving to the detriment of their own quality of life and health. There is also a danger that your adult child may assume that they can drop off the children with granny at any time, forgetting that granny may have other arrangements made. Be clear about how much time you would like to spend with your grandchildren and talk to your son or daughter about this so they know what to expect.

Where the relationship between parents breaks down, grandparents can play a very important role. They can offer great support by way of emotional support and advice, childcare, financial assistance and housing.

It can happen where there is no longer a relationship between parents, that one of the parents, usually the father, can feel left out, isolated or unsure about his particular role and responsibilities to his child. If there are difficulties between the two families, as a grandparent, do try to welcome, or at least tolerate, whatever relationship develops between the other parent, her/his extended family and your grandchild. Time spent building a bridge of communication between families is truly in the best interest of your grandchild and all the families involved.



## When your daughter and her baby live with you



This can be a big transition - having children in the house again while juggling existing commitments and managing life generally. While it is a commitment, it can be a very happy and fulfilling experience for all concerned – the children, the parents and the grandparents. As a grandparent you can be a real source of advice and help to the new parent.

**It can be a very fine balance between supporting your daughter and taking over rearing your grandchild. Be aware that your daughter is the person with the main and legal responsibility for her child in the household.**

Where a few generations are living in the same household it can be challenging. Sometimes it can be difficult to balance the demands of middle adulthood (work, relationships, parenting and leisure) and a new grandchild in the house. Your house can become very crowded, your other children may feel left out or jealous and money can be in short supply. It can be very difficult keeping all the balls in the air at the same time - you are likely to drop one or two occasionally!

It is important that parents, grandparents and other family members speak to, and treat each other, with respect. You may not always get on, but you can still be civil for the sake of the children. Everyone involved should be prepared to put the welfare of the child first and be ready to compromise. Try to avoid arguing with, or criticising, family members in front of the children. It can be very upsetting for them.

While your daughter may really appreciate your help and support you may find yourself having problems with each other from time to time. Maybe this isn't new but sharing your home with your 'child' and her child can make things worse. You might not have sorted out who is mammy in the house and your daughter may feel you are interfering. Your daughter might assume you are available for endless baby sitting. If you find yourself in this situation where there is a lot of tension or conflict between you, try to find a good time to talk together about how you are feeling and what your limits are. It is important that you both listen to each other and to each other's point of view. Be honest when talking to each other and try to think up new ways of sorting out the problems.

If things are so bad that you cannot sit down with your daughter it may be worth thinking about bringing in a neutral person to help you work through the difficulties. Contacting a mediation service might help (see page 3).

## Them and us

It's great when both sets of grandparents can get on but in some situations this doesn't happen. Lack of trust and fear contribute to a "them and us" situation. It can be especially difficult if you feel the other parent and her/his family are "not suitable". Try to find some common ground – after all you are all grandparents of the same child – and you all will continue to be over her/his lifetime. Remember that your grandchild is the most important person in all of this.

## Helpful hints:

- Think about what you want in your life and make sure you have time to do these things.
- Enjoy your own interests. You will then be more relaxed and a "fun giver" grandparent. This can be a huge support to your daughter and grandchild.
- Don't assume that just because your daughter is living with you that you have to take over the minding of the baby.
- You are not at the beck and call of your daughter.
- Think about what you are prepared to offer in terms of time, child-minding and indirect financial support (e.g. food, heat etc). Be realistic about how much time you can devote to caring for your grandchild and make this clear and agree it with your daughter.
- Negotiate your hours and payment for child care, if necessary.
- If you feel you are being taken for granted and left "holding the baby" for too long, remind your daughter that she is the parent and therefore the one with the main responsibility for the child.
- Grandparents and parents can have different ideas around discipline or routine issues like mealtimes, bedtimes or budgeting. Talk through these issues openly and be open to some give and take.
- Keep an eye on your other children and do your best to give them the attention they need.
- Keep alive your relationship with your own partner and the other adult relationships in your life.
- Be prepared for when your daughter decides to move out of the family home with your grandchild. While it might bring some relief you may also miss her and your grandchild. Just remember that it is important for her to have her own life, separate from yours.

### On the other hand:

- Sometimes grandparents and parents end up competing with each other for the child's affection. Try not to do this.
- Grandparents can often make it difficult for their grandchildren to have a relationship with their fathers. Remember that both parents are important to children. Don't make it any harder for the dad than it may already be.
- Don't be overwhelmed with worries about being a grandparent. If you need help don't be afraid to ask for it. It can be very helpful to seek support and advice. Contact one of the agencies listed at the back of this booklet.

**Remember how special and important you are to your grandchild, bringing much joy to his/her life.**

# When your daughter or son is a teenager

You may have many mixed emotions when hearing of your teenage daughter's pregnancy or your teenage son becomes an expectant father. You may be shocked, disappointed and unsure where to turn. You may feel angry at becoming a grandparent before you are ready. You might find yourself blaming your teenager, her/his friends, the baby's other parent and her/his family as well as yourself.

You may fear that the pregnancy will deprive your daughter or son of the normal teen years and limit her/his choices for the future. You may worry about how s/he will cope as a young mother/father, about her/his ability to complete her/his education and have a career. You may worry if your daughter/son is not in a relationship – how will s/he cope as a single parent?

While teenage pregnancy can place significant stress and pressure on individual relationships and the wider family, the birth of a baby can also improve relations between young mothers and their parents. It can bring you closer together.

## Young parents

Young parents can still feel the stigma of being a teenage parent. When grandmothers attend appointments, professionals often tend to address them, rather than the young parents. If this is happening try to direct the conversation to the young mother. Young fathers particularly feel excluded in hospitals and in other services and are often not invited to be part of the pregnancy. It can be very difficult for the young father at this time, as he has no rights in respect of his child when he is not married to the mother, though he can apply for these rights after his child is born (see page 3).

Many young parents see the pregnancy and birth as a predominantly positive event. Young mothers tend not to see their pregnancies as a disaster that is likely to ruin their young lives. In fact many young parents see it as an opportunity. On the other hand teenage mothers may be less aware of the stress that their pregnancies and the birth of their babies have on the family and especially the grandparents. If you feel that you need a hand in this situation, check if there is a Teen Parents Support Programme in your area (see page 20) or you could contact a Pregnancy Counselling Service (see page 19)

## When your teenager becomes a parent

Young parents, like other parents, want to be the best parents they can be and their families are very important sources of support for them in achieving this. The young mother's mother in particular is central in giving emotional and practical support to the young mother. The father's mother can also play a key role in supporting her young son to take up the responsibility of fatherhood. Young mothers and fathers usually see their parents as supportive, but there can also be disagreements. Families often struggle to find the right balance on issues such as discipline - particularly if the mother is in school and a routine is needed. Conflict can arise over household tasks, baby care practices and limits for the teenager. It can also be a challenge for grandparents to juggle the needs of other family members with the needs of the new baby in the house.

Parents of young men who become fathers can feel disconnected from the pregnancy as the teenage girl and her family are the centre of attention. You may feel the balance of power is very much on the mother's side and that the mother and her parents have control over your contact with your grandchild. You become aware that if the parents split up you could lose contact with your grandchild. Find out what your rights are (see page 16) and remember how important you (and your son) are to your grandchild.

Get a copy of the *Young Parent Survival Guide* from Treoir, [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or  
Local 1890 252 084

## Who's the mammy?

Where young mothers live at home, babies can be reared by the young mother and her own mother. For some families all three generations living in the same house does not present a problem. This is usually when the mother and grandmother have very clear limits and roles which they stick to as much as possible, or in situations where the grandmother provides the overall care and there is no dispute about it.

It can be very difficult not to comment or get involved in the way your daughter cares for her child. You may not agree with the way your daughter is rearing her child. It is a very fine balance between being supportive and taking over. Be clear as to "Who's the mammy?"

## Support for you

You may need to get support for yourself. Family and friends can be helpful – or talk to your GP. Maybe you could get one-to-one support from a support service (see page 19) or even consider setting up a grandparents support group. You may need support on how to manage and cope with parenting a pregnant or parenting teenager, information on rights and entitlements, how to organise going back to school and it can be great just having somebody to talk to about your own particular concerns.

# Grandparents providing full-time care for grandchildren

When parents are no longer able to care full-time for their children, grandparents may 'step in' to take on the role of main carer of their grandchildren in order to keep them within the family. While this is a full-time commitment, it is an informal arrangement where you have no legal rights in respect of your grandchild (see page 15).

Being the main carer of your grandchild can be challenging, bringing many additional responsibilities for you. Apart from the disruption to your normal routine, caring for a child or young person can be demanding and tiring. So make life as easy as you can for yourself. Knowing that your grandchild will benefit from your love and care can be a great comfort.

Keep an eye on your own adult relationships - especially your relationship with your significant other. Keep talking to each other, make special time for yourselves away from the grandchildren and above all keep your sense of humour.

## Your other children may have reactions to you raising your grandchild

Listen to your other children. They deserve to have their concerns heard. Your other children may be concerned about your health or jealous of the time you spend with your grandchild. They have a right to their own opinions about the situation and they have to make their own decisions about how they want to be involved. If they don't agree with your decision to rear your grandchild they may not want to offer any help. Don't expect it.

## Your other grandchildren

Don't forget your other grandchildren. It doesn't take much time or money to make a child feel remembered, even in another country. Sometimes just a postcard is enough.

## Contact between your grandchild and her/his parent

It is important to recognise that a child may need contact with her/his parents if this is in your grandchild's best interest.

**Get a copy of Treoir's book *Family Links – steps and stages for hints on how to do this well* from [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or Local 1890 252 084.**

If circumstances do not permit this contact, talking to your grandchild about her/his parents and keeping their memory 'alive' is very important.



## Dealing with your grandchild's parents if they are disruptive

The parents of your grandchildren can be in and out of your life, causing continual disruption. Only you can break the cycle, but it takes determination, courage, and a few guiding principles:

- Both grandparents should present a united front to your adult children who are expert manipulators and know which of you to go to when they want something. Discuss limits and boundaries in advance and then stick to them. Be firm and don't make threats you can't follow through on. If you don't, your adult children get the message that even if you talk big, they can still take advantage of you.
- Learn to say no. You don't have to give explanations or make speeches. "No" can be a complete sentence.
- You need to come to grips with the fact that you may not be able to help or change your adult child.

Grandparents sacrifice a lot to raise a grandchild but there are rewards: the relief of knowing that the grandchildren are safe and happy, the wonder of watching them grow, the pride in their accomplishments. Some grandparents say their grandchildren keep them young. "There is something positively magical in the hugs and kisses that makes it all worthwhile."

## General Supports

- Public Health Nurses provide both general health and specific developmental advice and monitor the development of the child. They also offer a valuable support to those who are involved in the main care of children under the age of three.
- General Practitioners can offer valuable medical help and general support and advice.
- If you are having difficulties coping at a particular time, you may find it useful to contact the Duty Social Worker at the local health centre. S/he may be able to offer some advice and assistance to you.
- There are other agencies that offer support to grandparents and these are listed at the back of this booklet. Contact them for support and information.

## Financial Supports

### ■ Child Benefit

As a grandparent rearing your grandchild you may qualify for Child Benefit. You can get the application form, CB1, from a post office. Once the Department of Social Protection is satisfied that your grandchild is living with you and you are providing full-time care, they will write to your grandchild's parent telling them of their intention to make the payment to you. If the parent doesn't reply within 14 days, then you should get Child Benefit for your grandchild.

### ■ Guardian's Payment

A Guardian's Payment may be made to a person taking care of a child whose parents have died, are unknown or have abandoned her/him. It is not necessary to be a legally appointed guardian to qualify for this payment. Your grandchild must be living with you to qualify and you must be 'habitually resident' in Ireland. You can get this Payment until your grandchild is 18, or 22 if s/he is in full-time education.

There are two kinds of Guardian's Payment you can apply for:

#### Guardian's Contributory Payment

If either of the child's parents or step-parents had worked at any time and paid PRSI for 26 weeks.

#### Guardian's Non-Contributory Payment

This payment is means tested on the child's means.

If you are already getting another payment from the Department of Social Protection in your own right you can still get the Guardian's Payment. If you are applying for Family Income Supplement, a Guardian's Payment will be ignored in working out your entitlement.

Get an application form for Guardian's Payment from a post office and send it to:

**Social Welfare Services, College Road, Sligo. Tel: (071) 915 7100, Locall: 1890 500 000**

You may also be entitled to:

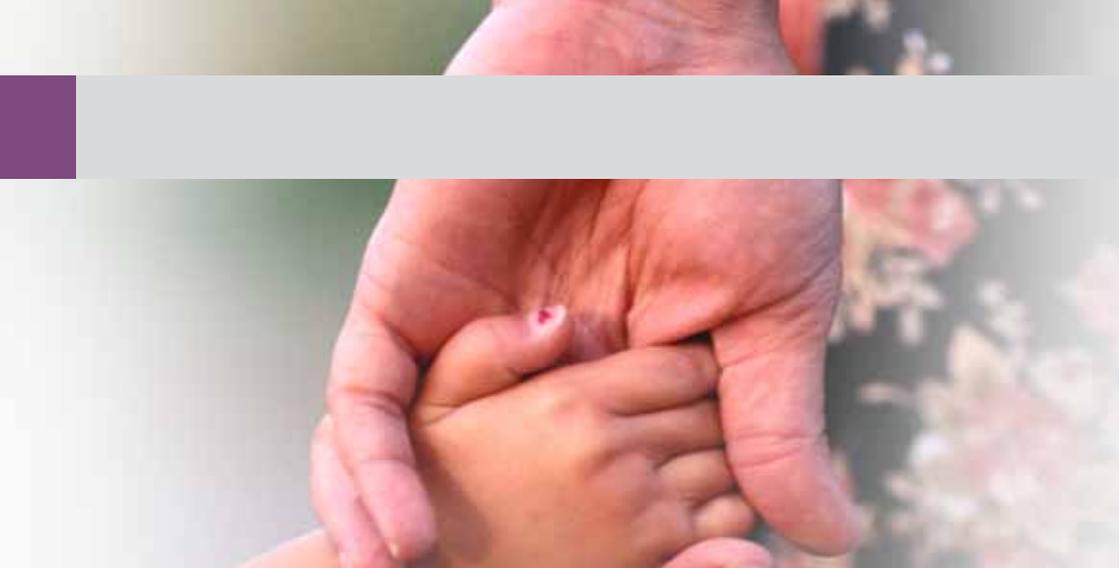
**Fuel Allowance/Bereavement Grant/Assistance** under the **Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme**. Talk to the Community Welfare Officer in your local health centre.

## Medical Card

Apply to have your grandchild added to your own Medical Card or apply for a Medical Card for your grandchild in her/his own right through your local health centre or online.

### Consider approaching your grandchild's parents for maintenance.

Both parents of your grandchild have a responsibility to support their child financially. It is possible for you to apply to court to order one or both parents to pay maintenance to help you provide for your grandchild.



## Relative foster care

It might be appropriate for you to become a Relative Foster Carer of your grandchild through the Health Service Executive (HSE), if the HSE assesses that the child is at risk. In making their decision about the relative being a foster parent to the child, the HSE will decide what is in the best interest of the child. The HSE will also take into account the needs of the child and the abilities, suitability etc. of the relative to be a foster parent. You are assessed by the HSE in exactly the same way as all other foster parents. If you are assessed as a Relative Foster Carer you will be required to co-operate fully with the HSE under the Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations 1995, in the best interest of your grandchild. You will also receive the Foster Care Allowance. You cannot get a Guardian's Payment and a Foster Care Allowance.

### Child Care (Amendment) Act 2007

The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2007 gives rights to foster/relative parents who have cared for a foster child for a continuous period of 5 years or more.

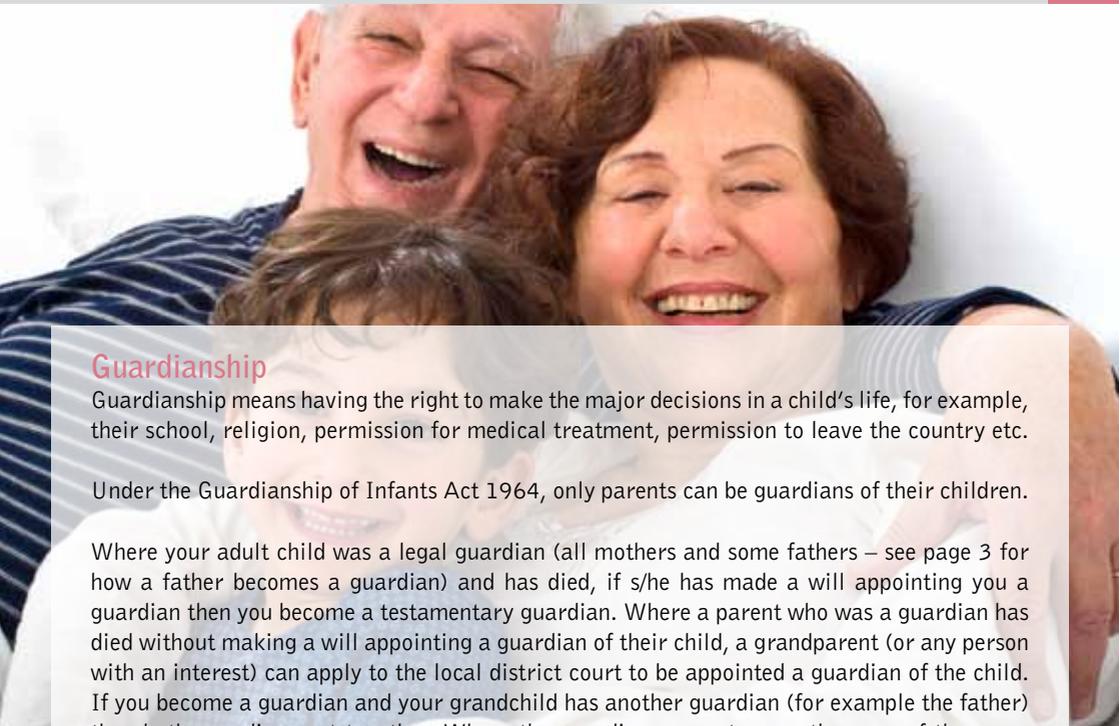
It gives the foster/relative parent the right to consent to medical or psychiatric examination, treatment or assessment with respect to the child and permission to sign passport applications and school trip consent forms.

You apply to the courts with the knowledge and consent of the HSE.

### The main criteria for application are:

- The child must be in continuous care of the foster/relative parent for a period of not less than 5 years
- The granting of the order must be in the best interest of the child
- The HSE must support the application
- The person in loco parentis must be informed of the application
- The child's wishes must be taken into consideration having regard to the age and understanding of the child

# Legal Rights for grandparents rearing their grandchildren



## Guardianship

Guardianship means having the right to make the major decisions in a child's life, for example, their school, religion, permission for medical treatment, permission to leave the country etc.

Under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964, only parents can be guardians of their children.

Where your adult child was a legal guardian (all mothers and some fathers – see page 3 for how a father becomes a guardian) and has died, if s/he has made a will appointing you a guardian then you become a testamentary guardian. Where a parent who was a guardian has died without making a will appointing a guardian of their child, a grandparent (or any person with an interest) can apply to the local district court to be appointed a guardian of the child. If you become a guardian and your grandchild has another guardian (for example the father) then both guardians act together. Where the guardians cannot agree then one of them can apply to the local district court for the court to decide on the issue.

## Maintenance

Where a child is not being properly financially maintained by either or both parents you, as the main carer of the child, can apply to the local district court for a maintenance order from one or both parents. Contact the clerk of your local district court. You may qualify for Legal Aid (see page 22).

## Adoption

You may apply to your local HSE Adoption Team to adopt your grandchild should that be appropriate. This is a major decision that needs much thought and discussion.

## Wardship

Where a child (under 18) requires the Court's protection for a particular reason they may be taken into Wardship. Wardship means the court would take on itself the rights and responsibilities of parents in the interests of a child. This will only be considered if all other remedies have been exhausted. Contact the [Office of the Wards of Court](#), Tel: 01 8886189/40, [wards@courts.ie](mailto:wards@courts.ie)

# Difficulty with staying in touch with your grandchild

If contact with your grandchild is proving difficult, try to build a bridge of communication between you, the parents and the other grandparents. This could be very beneficial and helpful to your grandchild. Building on this communication may take time and hard work, but it is truly in the interest of your grandchild and both families.

The responsibility for maintaining contact rests primarily with the parents. Encourage your daughter/son to try to reach some agreement around contact with your grandchild for themselves and for you. Remind your daughter/son that this contact is important for the child and her/his relationships with the whole family.

Family negotiations that work best are carried out through open and clear communication, especially in the operation of day-to-day contact issues.

It may be helpful, or even necessary, to involve a third party to work through the difficulties within the family. Mediation services offer precisely this. Mediation can only take place where all interested parties, parents and grandparents, agree to take part in the mediation process. The Family Mediation Service works with the parents and grandparents together to help them work out a mutually acceptable arrangement regarding access. Mediation is always confidential. For details of mediation services [see page 3](#).

## Applying to court for access

Grandparents often are reluctant to take legal action because of the fear of causing further strain in what already may be a difficult relationship and because of the considerable cost of legal proceedings. You need to balance up all the issues before making a final decision. Check if you are entitled to Legal Aid: Tel: **066 947 1000** or **LoCall: 1890 615 200**, email: [info@legalaidboard.ie](mailto:info@legalaidboard.ie), [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie). If you are confident enough you could represent yourself in the local district court. All hearings are held in private and you might be the best person to tell the court of your desire to be in touch with your grandchild. If you decide to get a solicitor make sure it is someone who is experienced in family law.

Obtaining access for grandparents is a two-tiered process. The first application is applying for leave to apply for access which is basically asking for the court's permission to apply for access. The Court, in arriving at the decision at this stage, must always have regard to:

- your connection with the child
- the risk if any, of the application disrupting the child's life to the extent that the child would be harmed by the access
- the wishes of the child's guardian(s)

If you are successful at this first stage then you can make the second application to the District Court for the access itself. The second application can follow on immediately after the first application.

Get a copy of *Taking The Stand* – a guide to resolving disputes in relation to children. It is available from Treoir. See [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or phone 1890 252 084.

### If everything else fails ....

and you are unable to be in touch with your grandchild for whatever reason it may help to:

- write (but do not post) birthday or Christmas cards or letters
- keep a diary of your day-to-day activities to help her/him understand your life
- make a tape telling the child how you miss and love them
- keep a photo of the child visible.

Many grandparents worry that they may die without telling their grandchildren how they feel about them. It would be a good idea to ask a family member or friend to see to it that when you do die, and your grandchild comes looking for information about you, your mementos can be handed over on your behalf. A grandchild will treasure and be comforted by your simple mementos.

You can play a very important role in your grandchild's life. It can be difficult at times but there are supports available to assist and support you.



## Concerns about the well being and safety of your grandchild

Some parents find it difficult to cope with the demands of caring for their children. If you are concerned about the quality of care or safety of your grandchild, if possible, try to talk to the parents about your concerns, offer them what support you can and suggest they seek professional help. It could be helpful for them to contact their GP, public health nurse or the duty social worker in the local health centre for advice and guidance. You yourself, as grandparent, can also approach the duty social worker in your area for advice. Reporting a concern about a child is not easy. If you're not sure about your concerns, you could discuss them with a social worker or public health nurse. This can help you decide whether you want to make a formal report.

If you want to make a formal report to the designated officer in the HSE you will be asked to give specific and witnessed instances where your grandchild's safety is at risk. Each HSE Local Health Office has a social worker on duty, generally Monday to Friday 9-5pm. If a child is in danger outside these hours you should contact the Gardai.

The duty social worker will look into the matter and will establish the degree of risk. Following this a family support plan may be put in place or the HSE may have to provide alternative care for your grandchild. This could include Relative Foster Care (see page 14). Under The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, so long as you report what you believe is true and it is done in good faith you cannot be sued.

**Reporting suspected abuse or harmful behaviour towards your grandchild is a very serious matter and you must be very clear about the information you are reporting. However, if you have serious and well founded fears for the safety of your grandchild such concerns should not be ignored.**

### Get a copy of

***Our children first - a parent's guide to the National Child Protection Guidelines*** from Barnardos (free). Tel: **01 453 0355**, Callsave: **1850 222 300**, email: [info@barnardos.ie](mailto:info@barnardos.ie), [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie).

### If your grandchild is in the care of the HSE

There is a very useful booklet for families who have a child in care: ***Families with Children in Care – a guide to your rights if your child is in care***. It is available from Clare Advocacy (Tel: **065 6828 178**), Family Advocacy Service, Limerick (Tel: **061 314 111**) or The Partnership with Families Project (Tel: **067 31800**).

If your grandchild is in care s/he might like to contact Empowering People In Care (EPIC) which is an independent organisation that advocates for the rights of young people in care. See [www.epiconline.ie](http://www.epiconline.ie), email [info@epiconline.ie](mailto:info@epiconline.ie) or Tel: **01 8727 661**.

# Useful contacts

## Pregnancy Support Services

### Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Support Service

LoCall: **1850 20 06 00**

Tel: **090 964 8190**

E-mail: [ballinasloesps@hse.ie](mailto:ballinasloesps@hse.ie)

### Bray Women's Health Centre

Tel: **081 822 7034**

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

### Cura

LoCall: **1850 622 626**

E-mail: [curacares@cura.ie](mailto:curacares@cura.ie)

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

### Femplus Clinic

Dublin 15

Tel: **01 821 0999**

E-mail: [info@femplus.ie](mailto:info@femplus.ie)

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

### Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)

LoCall: **1850 49 50 51**

E-mail: [post@ifpa.ie](mailto:post@ifpa.ie)

[www.ifpa.ie/eng/pregnancy counselling](http://www.ifpa.ie/eng/pregnancy_counselling)

### Kerry Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service Family Planning and Women's Health Clinic

Tralee

Tel: **066 712 5322**

### Counselling and Training Services of Kerry

Tralee

Tel: **066 712 2931**

### South West Counselling Centre, Killarney

Tel: **064 663 6416 / 064 663 6474**

### Life Pregnancy Care

LoCall: **1850 28 12 81**

E-mail: [lifenational@eircom.net](mailto:lifenational@eircom.net)

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

### Mayo Crisis Pregnancy Support Service

LoCall: **1890 20 00 22**

E-mail: [mayopsc@hse.ie](mailto:mayopsc@hse.ie)

### Midlands Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service

LoCall: **1800 20 08 57**

E-mail: [crisispregnancy.counselling@hse.ie](mailto:crisispregnancy.counselling@hse.ie)

### One Family

LoCall: **1890 66 22 12**

Tel: **01 662 9212**

E-mail: [info@onefamily.ie](mailto:info@onefamily.ie)

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

### Pact

LoCall: **1850 67 33 33**

Tel: **01 296 2200**

E-mail: [info@pact.ie](mailto:info@pact.ie)

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

### Sexual Health Centre, Cork

Tel: **021 427 6676** or **021 427 5837**

E-mail: [sexualhealthcentre.com](mailto:sexualhealthcentre.com)

[www.sexualhealthcentre.com](http://www.sexualhealthcentre.com)

### The Well Woman Centre

Liffey Street, Tel: **01 872 8051**

Ballsbridge, Tel: **01 660 9860**

Coolock, Tel: **01 848 4511**

E-mail: [info@wellwomancentre.ie](mailto:info@wellwomancentre.ie)

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

### West Cork Crisis Pregnancy

Counselling Service

LoCall: **1890 252 359**

E-mail: [wccss@eircom.net](mailto:wccss@eircom.net)

### Youth Health Service, Cork

Tel: **021 422 0490** or **021 422 0491**

E-mail: [YHS@hse.ie](mailto:YHS@hse.ie)

# Useful contacts

## Teen Parents Support Programme

### CARLOW / KILKENNY

Bernie Loughman  
St. Catherine's Community  
Service Centre  
St. Joseph's Road, Carlow  
Tel: **059-913 8799** or **085-110 1511**  
E-mail: [berniel@catherines.ie](mailto:berniel@catherines.ie)

### CORK (City & County)

Teresa McElhinney  
34 Paul Street, Cork  
Tel: **021-4222 987** or **086-827 8772**  
E-mail: [tpspcork@eircom.net](mailto:tpspcork@eircom.net)  
[www.teenparents.ie](http://www.teenparents.ie)

### DONEGAL

(Letterkenny Finn Valley & Inishowen)  
Tara Rowan & Michelle Maguire  
2 Cedar House, Main Street  
Ballybofey, Co. Donegal  
Tel: **086-837 1335** or **086-818 6345**  
E-mail: [michelle.maguire@foroige.ie](mailto:michelle.maguire@foroige.ie)  
[tara.rowan@foroige.ie](mailto:tara.rowan@foroige.ie)

### DUBLIN

Ballyfermot Bluebell & Inchicore  
Ciara Hoey  
The Base Youth Centre  
Blackditch Road  
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10  
Tel: **01-654 6806** or **087-995 0439**  
E-mail: [ciara.woy@thebase.ie](mailto:ciara.woy@thebase.ie)

### DUBLIN 5, 13 & 17 & PARTS OF DUBLIN 3 & 9

Anita Whelan  
Doras Bui  
Bunratty Drive  
Coolock, Dublin 17  
Tel: **01-8484 811** or **087-279 4983**  
E-mail: [senior.progs@dorasbui.org](mailto:senior.progs@dorasbui.org)  
[www.dorasbui.org](http://www.dorasbui.org)

### DRIMNAGH, CRUMLIN, DUBLIN 24, & PARTS OF DUBLIN 8

Esther Pugh  
Barnardos  
10 Newlands Business Park  
Clondalkin, Dublin 22  
Tel: **01-403 2081** or **086-850 5503**  
E-mail: [esther.pugh@barnardos.ie](mailto:esther.pugh@barnardos.ie)

### FINGLAS

Rebecca Moore  
Barnardos  
Mater Christi Secondary School  
Cappagh Road, Finglas, Dublin 11  
Tel: **01-804 1765** or **087-952 3924**  
E-mail: [rebecca.moore@barnardos.ie](mailto:rebecca.moore@barnardos.ie)

### GALWAY (City & County)

Aileen Davies  
Teen Parents Support Programme  
Ground Floor, Nurses Home  
University College Hospital, Galway  
Tel: **091-544 960** or **085-763 3235**  
E-mail: [aileen.davies@hse.ie](mailto:aileen.davies@hse.ie)

### LIMERICK (City & County)

Martina Hogan  
Upper Henry Street, Limerick  
Tel: **061-411 643** or **086-602 0588**  
E-mail: [martina.hogan@lssc.ie](mailto:martina.hogan@lssc.ie)

### LOUTH

Joanne Murphy  
Floor 3 Nurses Residence  
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital  
Drogheda, Co. Louth  
Tel: **041-987 5273** or **087-219 4641**  
E-mail: [joannea.murphy@hse.ie](mailto:joannea.murphy@hse.ie)

### NORTH WEXFORD

(Gorey, Courtown, Camolin, Coolgreany,  
Ferns, Kilmuckridge, Bunclody)  
Réidín Dunne  
Barnardos  
16 North Parade  
Gorey, Co. Wexford  
Tel: **053-948 1014** or **087-967 7204**  
E-mail: [reidin.dunne@barnardos.ie](mailto:reidin.dunne@barnardos.ie)

### NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR TPSP

Margaret Morris  
Treoir  
14 Gandon House  
Custom House Square  
IFSC, Dublin 1  
Tel: **01-670 0167** or **087-251 8428**  
E-mail: [tpsp@treoir.ie](mailto:tpsp@treoir.ie)

# Other useful contacts

## Adoption Authority

Shelbourne House  
Shelbourne Road  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
Tel: **01 – 230 9300**  
E-mail: [info@aai.gov.ie](mailto:info@aai.gov.ie)  
[www.aai.gov.ie](http://www.aai.gov.ie)

## Age Action Ireland

Promotes positive ageing  
30/31 Lower Camden Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: **01 – 475 6989**  
E-mail: [info@ageaction.ie](mailto:info@ageaction.ie)  
[www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie)

## Al-Anon-Ireland

Room 5  
5 Capel Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: **01 – 8732 699**  
E-mail: [info@al-anon-ireland.org](mailto:info@al-anon-ireland.org)  
[www.al-anon-ireland.org](http://www.al-anon-ireland.org)

## Barnardos

Christ Church Square  
Dublin 8  
Tel: **01 – 453 0355**  
Callsave: **1850 222 300**  
E-mail: [info@barnardos](mailto:info@barnardos)  
[www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

## Citizens Information

Ground Floor  
George's Quay House  
43 Townsend Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: **01 – 605 9000**  
LoCall: **1890 777 121**  
[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

## Department of Social Protection

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

## Drug and Alcohol Information and Support

Telephone information and support **1800 459 459**  
E-mail: [info@drugs.ie](mailto:info@drugs.ie)  
E-mail information and support: [drugshiv@hse.ie](mailto:drugshiv@hse.ie)  
[www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie)

## EPIC

Empowering People in Care  
7 Red Cow Lane  
Smithfield  
Dublin 7  
Tel: **01 – 8727 661**  
E-mail: [info@epiconline.ie](mailto:info@epiconline.ie)  
[www.epiconline.ie](http://www.epiconline.ie)

## Family Law Office

Dolphin House  
East Essex Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: **01 – 872 5555**

## Local District Courts

Find your local district court at  
[www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)

## Family Resource Centres

Supporting families.....building communities  
Find your local family resource centre at  
[www.familyresource.ie](http://www.familyresource.ie)

## FLAC

Promoting access to justice  
Free Legal Advice Centres  
13 Lower Dorset Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: **01 – 874 5690**  
Information and referral line: **1890 350 250**  
[www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)

## Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy

21 Dublin Road  
Bray  
Co. Wicklow  
Tel: **01 – 272 3427**  
E-mail: [iacp@iacp.ie](mailto:iacp@iacp.ie)  
[www.irish-counselling.ie](http://www.irish-counselling.ie)

# Other useful contacts

## Irish Foster Care Association of Ireland

Promotes family based solutions for children and young people in 'out of home care'.

Unit 23

Village Green

Tallaght village

Dublin 24

Tel: **01 – 4599 474**

E-mail: [info@ifca.ie](mailto:info@ifca.ie)

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

## Legal Aid Board

A professional, efficient, cost-effective, accessible legal aid and advice service

Quay Street

Cahiriveen

Co Kerry

Tel: **01 – 066 947 1000**

LoCall: **1890 615 200**

E-mail: [info@legalaiddboard.ie](mailto:info@legalaiddboard.ie)

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

## Money Advice & Budgeting Services

A national, free, confidential and independent service for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt.

Helpline: **1890 283 438**

E-mail: [helpline@mabs.ie](mailto:helpline@mabs.ie)

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

## Parentline

Provides a completely confidential helpline for parents and guardians

Carmichael Centre

North Bunswick Street

Dubliin 7

Tel: **01 – 8787 230**

E-mail: [info@parentline.ie](mailto:info@parentline.ie)

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

## Psychological Society of Ireland

CX House

2A Corn Exchange Place

Poolbeg Street

Dublin 2

Tel: **01 – 4749 160**

E-mail: [info@psihq.ie](mailto:info@psihq.ie)

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

## Treoir Information Leaflets

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>01.</b> Guardianship                | <b>07.</b> Birth registration              |
| <b>02.</b> Access, custody             | <b>08.</b> Passport application            |
| <b>03.</b> Rights of unmarried fathers | <b>09.</b> International Child Abduction   |
| <b>04.</b> Cohabiting parents          | <b>10.</b> Shared parenting                |
| <b>05.</b> Maintenance                 | <b>11.</b> Explaining family relationships |
| <b>06.</b> Establishing paternity      | <b>12.</b> Step-parent adoption            |

**Information Pack** - for parents who are not married to each other. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

**“Being there for them”** - for grandparents of children whose parents are not married to each other. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

**Cohabitants** - new legal rights and obligations for opposite and same sex couples. *Funded by the Family Support Agency.*

**Family Links Steps and Stages** positive pointers for parents who are helping their children to understand their family situation. *Funded by the Family Support Agency.*

**Young Parent Survival Guide** - a great magazine for young mums and dads. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

**Information for Young Parents in Education.** *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

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

**Adoption booklets for birth parents considering adoption.** *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

- 1.** Introduction\*
- 2.** Adoption in Ireland today
- 3.** Workbook

\*Also available online in Latvian, Lithuanian, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Romanian and Russian

**Reproductive Health Information for Migrant Women** available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Polish, Romanian, and Russian. Available in a manual or CD format. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

## Web based only publications

**Legal information for unmarried migrant parents** available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Polish, Romanian and Russian. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

## Sign up for:

**E-Bulletin** - information for unmarried parents and those involved with them.

**E-Newsletter** - for workers and young parents.

All publications can be downloaded from [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or order from Treoir: LoCall 1890 25 20 84, [info@treoir.ie](mailto:info@treoir.ie)



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The National Federation of Services for  
Unmarried Parents and their Children

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

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