



Citizens **Information** Board
information · advice · advocacy



Leaving School

A guide from Citizens Information

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This booklet is published by the Citizens Information Board.

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through citizensinformation.ie, the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and the nationwide network of Citizens Information Centres (CICs).

It is responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

The information in this booklet is for general guidance only and is not a legal interpretation.

April 2024



Getting more information

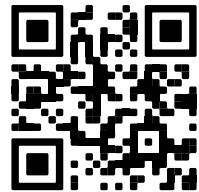


This guide is for people leaving school. It deals with some of the practical questions about education and employment you may have. It gives a short overview of the options and schemes available to you. You can visit **citizensinformation.ie** to find out more.

You can also get more information on all the topics covered in this booklet from the network of Citizens Information Centres and from the national Citizens Information Phone Service on **0818 07 4000**.

Find out more with QR codes

Point the camera on your smartphone at the black-and-white QR code to visit the online version of this booklet, where you can find links to all the topics covered.



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Starting out



Leaving school can be an exciting time with many opportunities and possibilities ahead of you.

In this guide, we look at some of your options for further education and training. We also briefly look at what you need to know when starting work for the first time and the supports available if you are unemployed.

Personal Public Service number

You should check that you have a **Personal Public Service (PPS) number**. This is a unique number that you use to access public services in Ireland, including social welfare, tax, education and health services. If you do not know your PPS number, contact **your local Intreo Centre or local Social Welfare Branch Office** and the staff there can find your number for you.

Public Services Card

You need a **Public Services Card (PSC)** to access social welfare and certain other government services.



To get your PSC, you need to make an appointment at a **PSC Registration Centre** (Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office) to prove your identity. Once you have your PSC, you can also create a verified **MyGovID** account. MyGovID lets you access a range of public services online.

Managing your money

The **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)** provides advice on planning a weekly budget. You can find useful information on the MABS website, mabs.ie, or you can call the MABS helpline on 0818 07 2000 to speak with an adviser.

Renting a place to live

If you plan to live away from home, work out how much you can afford for rent. Don't forget to allow for bills like electricity and heating and to budget for food and other expenses.

Tenants have certain rights. For example, you are entitled to **minimum standards of accommodation** and a certain amount of notice if your **landlord wants you to leave**. You also have responsibilities as a tenant, such as paying your rent on time and keeping the property in good order.


Threshold provides information about what you should know before you sign a lease. They can help if you need advice about your **rights and responsibilities as a tenant**. See **threshold.ie** for their contact details and opening hours.

Your landlord must register your tenancy every year with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). The RTB also has a service to help resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. You can contact the **RTB** to ask questions you have about your rent and tenancy.

Register to vote

When you turn 18, you can vote in all elections and referendums. To vote, **you must be registered**. You can register to vote at **checktheregister.ie** or by **filling in an application form**. If you are 16 or 17, you can pre-register to vote and your name will be added to the register when you turn 18. Application forms are available from all local authorities, post offices and public libraries. You should return the completed form to your local authority.

If you do not give your PPS number with your application, you must get your form and ID witnessed at a local Garda station.



Apply to vote on
checktheregister.ie

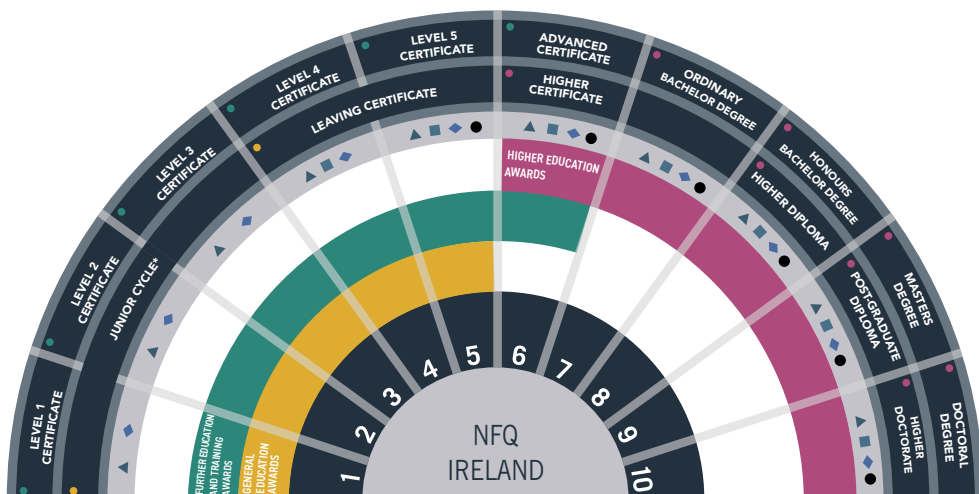
Education and training



There are many courses to help you get further education, skills and qualifications.

You can find information on qualifax.ie about the different courses available. There is a calendar of **career events** that run throughout the year.

Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses offer a mix of practical work, academic learning and work experience. They are a step towards skilled employment in a wide range of areas, including childcare, computing and technology, and tourism. PLC courses run throughout the country and are at Levels 5 or 6 of the **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**. You can go on to further studies at third-level after you complete your PLC course. Find a list of colleges by region on the Education and Training Boards Ireland website: etbi.ie.



National Framework of Qualifications, qqi.ie



For more, see Education
and Training on
citizensinformation.ie

If you intend to continue to **third-level education** in Ireland, you can apply online through the **Central Applications Office (CAO)**. The CAO website and handbook gives detailed information on how to apply. See cao.ie.


Alternatively, you can get a third-level degree at Levels 7 or 8 of the NFQ through the **tertiary education programme**. You start your course in a further education college and finish it in a higher education college or university. You do not need to apply through the CAO or have the same Leaving Cert points, but courses have their own entry requirements. There are more than 40 different courses available, including business, nursing, engineering, and software development. Find information on the National Tertiary Office website: nto.heai.ie.

The **Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)** admissions scheme allocates a number of third-level places on a reduced-points basis to school leavers from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The **Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)** offers places on a reduced-points basis to school leavers with disabilities. You apply online through the CAO for both schemes. For more information, see accesscollege.ie.

Financial support

If you are a full-time PLC student or third-level undergraduate, you may qualify for a **student grant**.

The grant has 2 parts: a maintenance grant and a fee grant. A maintenance grant is a contribution toward your living costs. A fee grant can cover all or part of your fees, the **Student Contribution** and the cost of essential field trips.



For more information
on financial supports
for education, see
citizensinformation.ie

There is an extra grant for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which tops up the ordinary student grant. You may qualify for this if you or your parents are getting certain social welfare payments or taking part in certain programmes. Applications for the 2024-2025 student grant are now open. To apply for a student grant, you should register with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) at susie.ie.

The **Free Fees Initiative** allows you to participate in higher education without paying tuition fees. You still have to pay the Student Contribution. There is no separate application form for free fees. Your eligibility is assessed on the basis of the information you give when you apply for a college place.

Tax relief on tuition fees and the Student Contribution may be available to you or to the person paying your fees.

You may get a **Back to Education Allowance** to participate in full-time education if you have been out of school for some time and you are getting a qualifying social welfare payment.

Training and apprenticeships

There are **Further Education and Training (FET)** courses in a range of different areas. You may be paid an allowance, depending on your circumstances and the course.

Apprenticeships provide on-the-job training with an employer. While you are training on the job for a qualification, your employer pays you a recommended apprenticeship wage. You can find a list of apprenticeships on apprenticeship.ie.

You can get advice on training, apprenticeships and employment programmes from your Intreo Centre. You can also find out more on jobsireland.ie.

Youthreach provides education and training opportunities to people aged 15 to 20 who have left school without formal qualifications.

Contact your nearest Intreo Centre to find out about the **Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)**. This Scheme gives people who have never had a job, or who have lost their job, a chance to get work experience.



Working



There are many ways to find employment.

If you are looking for work, you should register with your local Intreo Centre. It provides information and advice for jobseekers, including a list of job vacancies.

You can find your nearest Intreo Centre on **gov.ie**. You can find and apply for jobs on **jobsireland.ie**. You can also upload your CV so that employers can see it.

Your rights at work

Your employer must inform you in writing of the terms and conditions of the job. When you start the job, your employer has a certain amount of time to give you this information.

If you do not get this information, you should ask your employer for it. If you are **working and aged under 18**, your employer must also give you a copy of the official summary of the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996.

You have certain **rights under employment law** including the **number of hours you can work, breaks at work, minimum wage** and **annual leave**. Your **contract** can give you more than your statutory minimum entitlements but not less. If you are not getting your rights or entitlements, or if you lose your job and think your dismissal was unfair, you can get help to enforce your employment rights.

For more information on your employment rights visit the Employment section on **citizensinformation.ie**.

You can also phone the Workplace Relations Commission's Information and Customer Service on 0818 80 80 90, or visit **workplacerelations.ie**.



Paying tax and PRSI

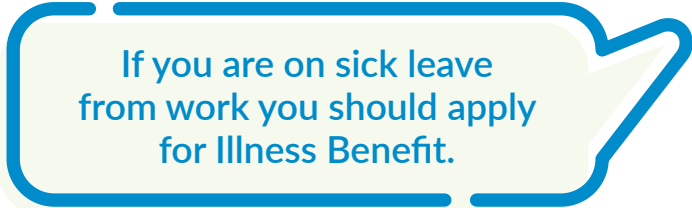
Your employer deducts **income tax**, the **Universal Social Charge (USC)** and **Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI)** from your wages. These deductions should be shown on your payslip. The amount deducted depends on how much you earn and your personal circumstances. Your PRSI contributions help you to qualify for social welfare payments if you are ill or unemployed.

When you get your first job, you must register the details of your job online through Revenue's myAccount service. Click on the 'Jobs and pensions' section at **Revenue.ie** and follow the instructions for 'Starting your first job'. If you don't register your job and give your employer your PPS number, you may pay higher tax on an emergency basis.

When you register with Revenue, your employer gets a Revenue Payroll Notification (RPN) and can refund you if you have paid too much tax. After your first job, if you start a new job you should give your PPS number to your new employer and they will register the job with Revenue.

All workers have tax credits that reduce the amount of tax they must pay. Other reliefs can also reduce your income tax, for example, if you pay college fees or medical expenses. For more information on **tax when starting work** and **tax credits and reliefs** see **Revenue.ie** or **citizensinformation.ie**

At the end of the tax year you can use Revenue's myAccount service to **review your tax** and see if you have paid the right amount of tax and USC for the year.



If you are on sick leave from work you should apply for Illness Benefit.

If you are sick

You must tell your employer if you get sick and cannot go to work. If you are working for the same employer for at least 13 weeks, you have a right to 5 days' sick pay a year. This is paid by your employer at 70% of your normal pay, up to a maximum of €110 a day.

If you have worked for less than 13 weeks, your employer may or may not pay you when you are out sick. If you are on **sick leave** you should apply for **Illness Benefit**. You need a medical cert from your GP (doctor) to get Statutory Sick Pay and Illness Benefit.

If you are not entitled to Illness Benefit, you should still send your medical certs to the Department of Social Protection because you may be entitled to **PRSI credits**. Credits are PRSI contributions which you do not have to pay for that keep your social insurance record up to date.

For more information, see the **disability and illness payments section** on [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie)

Injury at work

There are special social welfare provisions, called **Occupational Injuries Benefits (OIB)**, for workers who are injured at work, or on the way to or from work.

If you are injured at work or when travelling to or from work, you should tell your employer immediately and apply for a **declaration of accident at work**, using the Injury Benefit application form.



Health services



There are health services and benefits available to you.

A **medical card** entitles you to free medical care.

If you are not eligible for a medical card, you may qualify for a **GP visit card**. A GP visit card allows you to visit your doctor for free.

You may get a medical card or a GP visit card, if your income is below a certain amount.

If you are aged 16 to 25 and you are dependent on your parents, you can get a medical card or a GP visit card if your parents have a means-tested medical card or GP visit card.

With the **Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS)**, you don't pay more than €80 in any month for approved prescribed medicines for you and your family. The DPS is not based on your income.

You can apply online for a medical card, GP visit card or the Drugs Payment Scheme card on **mymedicalcard.ie**, or get an application form from **your local health office**.

Since April 2023, **public in-patient fees** have been abolished. This means public patients don't have to pay a daily charge to stay in hospital.

If you are a woman or person with a uterus, aged 17 to 31, you can get free **contraception**. You need to visit your doctor to get your free prescription. This visit and any check-ups you need are also free. The free contraception scheme includes emergency contraception, such as the morning-after-pill, which you can get from your pharmacy without a prescription from a GP.

You may be entitled to a medical card or GP visit card.



If you are over 17, you can order a free **sexually transmitted infection (STI) test online** to take at home. Some hospitals and clinics also offer free STI tests.

For other health services, including information about **mental health, unplanned pregnancy, sexual health** and **hospital services**, contact the HSE. You can use the webchat facility HSELive on [hse.ie](https://www.hse.ie). Your GP can also advise you and can refer you to available supports and services.

Claiming social welfare benefits



You can get a social welfare payment, either **Jobseeker's Benefit** or **Jobseeker's Allowance**, if you are aged 18 or over, unemployed and looking for work.

You apply for a jobseeker's payment at your Intreo Centre or local Social Welfare Branch Office. This is also known as **signing on**. You can also apply online at **MyWelfare.ie**.

To qualify for **Jobseeker's Benefit**, you must have paid PRSI contributions for at least 2 years. **Jobseeker's Allowance** is a means-tested payment and you do not need to have paid PRSI to qualify.

If you have just left school and are looking for a job, you cannot get Jobseeker's Allowance until 3 months after you have finished school and exams. If your parents are getting a social welfare payment, they can continue to get an **Increase for a Qualified Child** for you for these 3 months.

If you are aged over 18 and in financial difficulty, you can apply for a basic weekly **Supplementary Welfare Allowance**.

You can get a list of offices that provide Supplementary Welfare Allowance on **gov.ie**, or contact **your local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office**.

Safety online



The internet is a very useful resource and many of us spend a lot of time online. It is important to know how to stay safe online.

Coimisiún na Meán is the new media regulator for **online safety**, television broadcasting and video-on-demand services. You have the **right to complain** to online platforms if you encounter harmful or illegal content, need to report a violation of terms, or have concerns about targeted ads. You can escalate your complaint to Coimisiún na Meán.

Cybercrime and online scams are increasingly common and come in many forms. You can find out about protecting yourself online and know **how to avoid scams** on citizensinformation.ie.

It is a criminal offence to **make or share an intimate image without the consent** of the person in the image. You can **make an online report** about the publication of intimate images – you can do this anonymously. You can also report it to **an Garda Síochána**.

Buying online

Consumer law covers **your rights when you buy digital content and services**, such as games, streaming services and social media. All the digital content and services that you buy must meet certain conditions such as quality and performance. They should be what was agreed in the contract.

If things go wrong the seller should put things right. If they don't do this, you may get a refund. You can find out about **your rights if you have a problem with digital content or services**.

At what age can I ...?

AGE



Leave school

Age 16 or when you finish three years of post-primary education, whichever is the later



Leave home

Age 16 With parental consent

Age 18 Without parental consent



Get a job

Age 14 Up to seven hours per day (35 hours per week) during school holidays

Age 15 Up to eight hours per week during termtime and up to seven hours per day (35 hours per week) during school holidays

Age 16 Up to eight hours per day and 40 hours per week



Drive on a public road

Age 16 Motorbike up to 11kW and up to 125cc, moped and certain work vehicles

Age 17 Car and other vehicles with seats for up to eight passengers and maximum weight of 3,500kg

Age 18 Motorbike up to 35kW, goods vehicles up to 7,500kg

Age 21 Buses with seats for up to 16 passengers



Buy alcohol

Age 18 If you are aged under 18, you cannot buy alcohol and must be accompanied by a parent on licensed premises and may only remain on the premises up to 9pm (10pm from May to September). If aged 15 to 17, you can stay later when attending a private function at which a substantial meal is being served



Drink alcohol

Age 18 If you are aged under 18, you can drink alcohol in a private residence if you have your parent's consent



Vape

Age 18



Buy cigarettes

Age 18



Have a social media account

Age 16 Without parental consent

Under 16 With parental consent. Many social media platforms don't allow a person under the age of 13 to set up an account, even if they have their parent's consent

Find out more about
legal ages for different
activities on
[citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie)



Be charged with a criminal offence

Age 10 For murder, manslaughter, rape and aggravated sexual assault

Age 12 For other criminal offences



Consent to medical treatment

Age 16



Give blood

Age 18



Consent to having sex

Age 17



Have an abortion

Age 18 If you are over 16, you can choose not to have an adult involved and a doctor can offer you an abortion if they think you understand the information and give consent



Marry

Age 18



Apply for a 10-year passport

Age 18 If you are younger, you can only apply for a 5-year passport



Book a holiday or flight

Age 18



Apply for a National Age Card

Age 18



Register to vote

Age 18 For all elections and referendums



Stand for elections

Age 18 Local elections

Age 21 National and European elections

Age 35 Presidential election



Apply for a gender recognition certificate

Age 16 Parents can apply on your behalf if you have a Court Exemption Order

Age 18 Without parental assistance



Sit on a jury in court

Age 18



Enter a legally binding contract

Age 18 Except for certain contracts such as for necessities (for example, food) or apprenticeships

Further information

Citizens Information

citizensinformation.ie

Citizens Information Phone Service

Call: 0818 07 4000
Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm

Citizens Information Centres

Visit centres.citizensinformation.ie
to find your nearest centre.

Coimisiún na Meán

Complaints Contact Centre
Call: 01 963 7755 Monday
to Friday 8am-6pm or email
usersupport@cnam.ie **cnam.ie**

Department of Social Protection Information Section

Call: 0818 66 22 44 **gov.ie**

Health Service Executive

Information on mental health
services and supports
Call: 1800 111 888
yourmentalhealth.ie

Jigsaw

National Centre for Youth
Mental Health
jigsaw.ie

Jobs Ireland

jobsireland.ie

My Options helpline and counselling service

Information and support on all your
options if you have an unplanned
pregnancy.
Call: 1800 828 010
MyOptions.ie

Residential Tenancies Board

Call: 0818 30 30 37
rtb.ie

Road Safety Authority

Information on getting
a driving licence.
rsa.ie

Spunout

Information and support
for young people.
spunout.ie

Threshold

Call: 1800 454 454
threshold.ie

Workplace Relations Commission

Information and Customer Service
Call: 0818 80 80 90
workplacerelations.ie

Youth Information Centres

Find your nearest centre on
youthworkireland.ie



citizensinformation.ie



0818 07 4000 - Mon to Fri, 9am - 8pm



Local centres - locations nationwide

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citizensinformationboard.ie