




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



Leaving School

Everything you need to know about life after school



This booklet is published by the Citizens Information Board. The information in this booklet is for general guidance only and is not a legal interpretation.

Call us on **0818 07 4000** or visit **citizensinformation.ie**.

March 2025

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School's over – what now?

So, pretty soon, school is going to be out forever, or you're already finished school – and you're wondering, "What now?". That's where the Citizens Information Leaving School guide comes in!

This guide covers questions you may have about things like:

- College and further education options
- How to apply for college
- Getting student grant support
- Where to find apprenticeships
- Finding somewhere to live
- Starting a job for the first time
- Taking a year out

You can also get more information on everything covered in this guide from:

- **citizensinformation.ie**
- Your local **Citizens Information Centre**
- The Citizens Information Phone Service on **0818 07 4000**

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QR for more

This guide uses black and white QR codes to provide more information. Point the camera on your smartphone at the QR code to find out more about the topic.

The online version of this guide includes links to all topics. Scan this QR code to visit the online version of the Leaving School guide.



Career paths – what are my options?

Whether you're going into your final year or two of school, or you've just finished your Leaving Cert, you may be wondering what your employment options are.

There are many career paths you can take and, when it comes to picking a college, apprenticeship, training or work option, it can seem daunting taking that first step.

The important thing to remember is that the choice you make now doesn't have to be forever. It's okay to start along one career path and realise it's not for you.

How do I decide what to do after school?

When deciding what you want to do after school, think about things that interest you. These can be school subjects, hobbies or activities you enjoy, or anything at all.

Talk to your school's guidance counsellor, a trusted teacher, or to a family member. Don't forget to think about practical factors, like transport and finding somewhere to live if you need to move away from home. You can also research different careers online.

There are many different **career sectors**. With so much choice, it can be overwhelming trying to decide which area interests you the most. It can help to look at the different sectors broadly to see if any catch your interest. Career sectors can be grouped under seven main categories.

1. Agriculture, Animals & Food
2. STEM, Environment & Construction
3. Healthcare, Wellbeing & Sport
4. Creative Arts, Fashion & Media
5. Government, Law & Education
6. Accountancy, Finance & Insurance
7. Business, Sales & Tourism



What is Qualifax.ie?

You can use **Qualifax.ie** to browse a database of up to 15,000 courses at varying levels to find one that suits you.

You can find more information on the **career paths** you can take in each of these **categories** on CareersPortal.ie.



Careers Portal

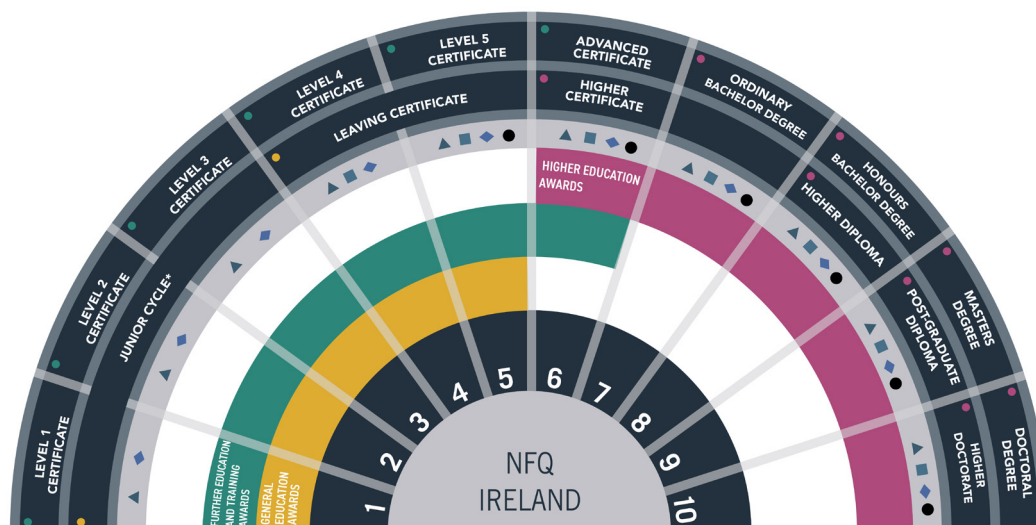
CareersPortal.ie is the national career guidance service in Ireland. It has information about different **occupations and apprenticeships**, and about different **career sectors**.



Whatever you choose to do, you'll need to get certain skills and will usually need to be qualified to a certain level. That's where qualifications come into play.

You can compare the levels of courses on the **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)** to help you decide which course will help you along the career path you want to follow.

The NFQ can also help with getting your Irish qualification recognised abroad.



Source: National Framework of Qualifications, qqi.ie

When you have decided what kind of further study or training you want to do, it's time to apply.



What is the National Framework of Qualifications?

The 'level' of a qualification means its level on the **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**. This tells an employer what you know, understand and can do after achieving a qualification.



Apprenticeships and training

If you want to learn a trade or profession, like plumbing, carpentry or electrical work, you may be interested in an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships provide on-the-job training with an employer in a craft trade or profession. While you are training on the job, your employer pays you a recommended apprenticeship wage. Apprenticeships lead to nationally recognised qualifications. You can start an apprenticeship from 16 to 18 years of age, depending on the apprenticeship programme. Your wages can vary depending on the type of apprenticeship you're doing.



Where can I find information on apprenticeships?

Find out about apprenticeships and how to apply on apprenticeship.ie.



You can also do a **Further Education and Training (FET) course**. There is a wide range of full-time and part-time courses available. You may be paid an allowance, depending on your circumstances and the course. **Youthreach** provides education and training opportunities to people aged 15 to 20 who have left school without formal qualifications.



What is the Work Placement Experience Programme?

The **Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)** gives people who have never had a job or who have lost their job a chance to get work experience. You must meet certain criteria to qualify for WPEP, including getting a qualifying social welfare payment.

PLCs and other routes to college

While the CAO is the main route to third-level education, it is not the only further education option available. Other alternative pathways to third-level education include:

- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses
- Tertiary education courses

So, if you don't find the exact course you want from the CAO, you might find a course that suits you better through these options.

What are PLC courses?

Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are full-time courses that offer a mix of practical work, academic learning and work experience. They are a step towards skilled employment in different areas, including childcare, tourism, computing and technology.

PLC courses run throughout the country and are at Levels 5 or 6 of the NFQ. You can go on to further studies at third-level after you complete your PLC course.



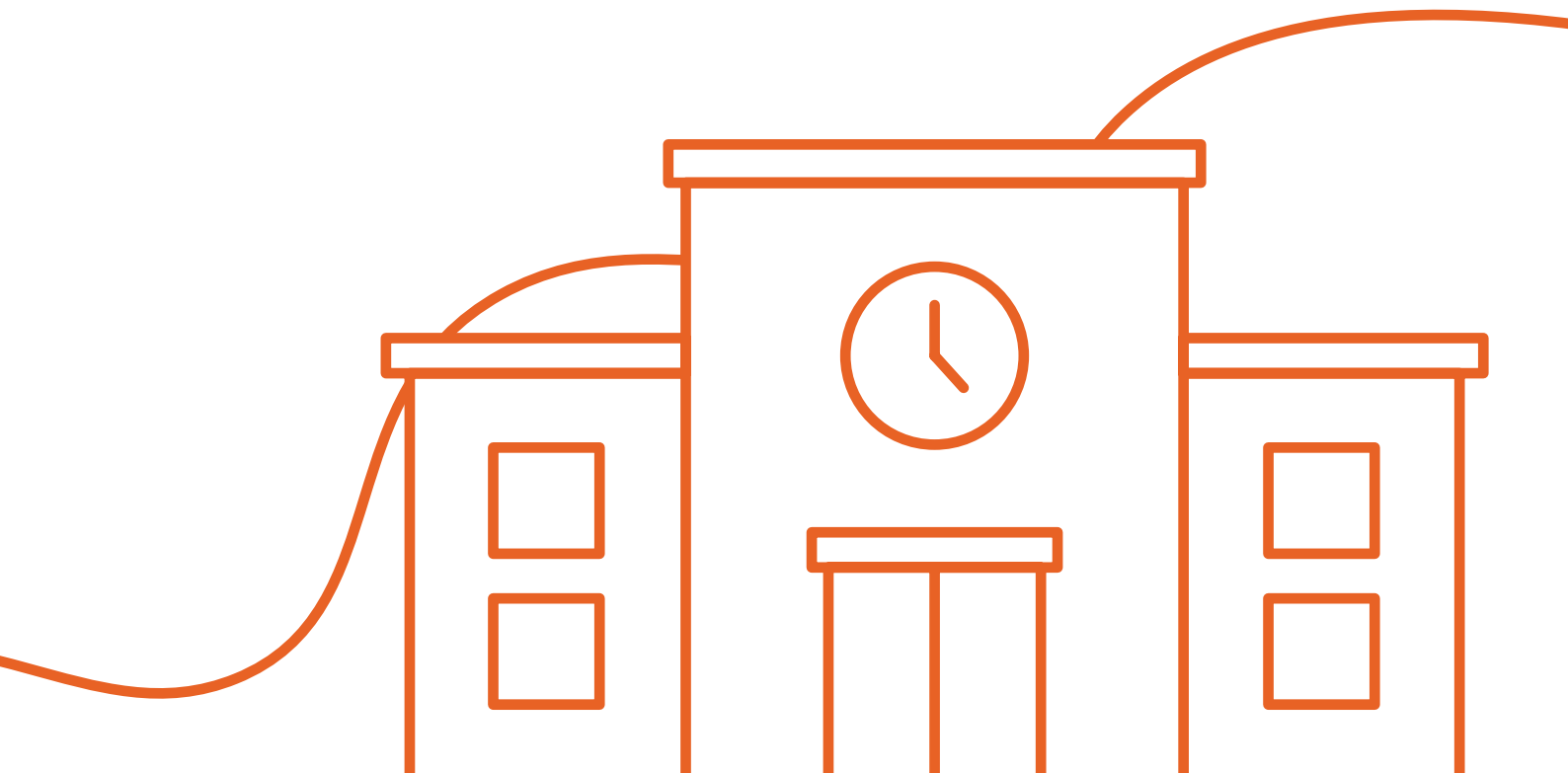
Where can I find PLC courses?

Find a list of colleges by region on the Education and Training Boards Ireland website [etbi.ie](https://www.etbi.ie), or search for PLC courses on the [Qualifax website](https://www.qualifax.ie).

What is the tertiary education programme?

You can get a third-level degree at Level 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.

Tertiary degrees have a different entry process. You do not apply through the CAO or need the same Leaving Cert points. Courses have their own entry requirements. There are over 40 courses available, including business, nursing, engineering and software development.



Where can I find information on tertiary education courses?

Find courses on the National Tertiary Office website: nto.heai.ie. You can apply through the **Courses page** from 1 February 2025. Applications will close in late September 2025.



Applying for college and the CAO

You **apply for almost all full-time third-level undergraduate courses** through the Central Applications Office (CAO).

Undergraduate courses include:

- Higher Certificates (Level 6)
- Ordinary Bachelor degrees (Level 7)
- Honours Bachelor degrees (Level 8)

You can find a list of all the courses on offer and information on how to apply in the **CAO Handbook**.

When do I apply to the CAO?

CAO applications open in November and close in February each year. You usually apply during sixth year so you progress to third-level when you finish your Leaving Cert exams.





What is the CAO?

The CAO **processes applications for undergraduate courses** in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The HEIs decide who gets places on their courses and they tell the CAO who makes the offers to successful candidates.



What is a restricted-application course?

Some courses are '**restricted-application courses**'. These courses have early assessment or interview procedures, sometimes as early as February. If you want to apply for a restricted course, you must include it in your application in time so that early assessment can be arranged.



How do I apply to the CAO?

You can apply to third-level institutions through the **CAO portal**. You can find a step-by-step guide to applying through the CAO on **citizensinformation.ie**.



You should read the latest version of the **CAO Handbook** before starting your application – this contains helpful and important information about the process.



What is a personalised CAO Handbook?

You can create a **personalised CAO Handbook** on the CAO website that you can view on your phone or smart device in the CAO Handbook app. You pick areas of interest and where you would like to study, and the CAO website suggests courses for you.



Important!

When it comes to picking your courses, list your courses in your genuine order of preference! Do NOT list them based on how you think you're going to perform in your exams!

You will be offered the first course on your list that you're eligible for, so if you're offered your first choice, you won't be offered your second choice – but if you're offered your third choice, you might still be offered your second or first choices in later rounds.



Practice makes perfect!

Before applying for real, you can practice doing your application using the **demo application form** on the CAO website.



What are HEAR and DARE?

The **Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)** and the **Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)** are college admissions schemes. Both schemes allocate some third-level places on a reduced points basis to certain school leavers.

- HEAR is for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds that are under-represented in third-level education.
- DARE is for students with a specific disability or learning difficulty, who have experienced additional educational challenges.

You must confirm on your CAO application if you want to be considered for either HEAR or DARE.

Find out more about HEAR and DARE on citizensinformation.ie

HEAR



DARE



Can I change my mind about courses?

You can **add courses or change your course choices online** up to the closing date in February free of charge. If you want to change your courses between February and early March, a fee applies (usually €10). The free change of mind facility becomes available again in early May until early July.

The CAO sends you a **Statement of Application Record** before the end of May asking you to verify that your application information is correct.



How will I get my offer?

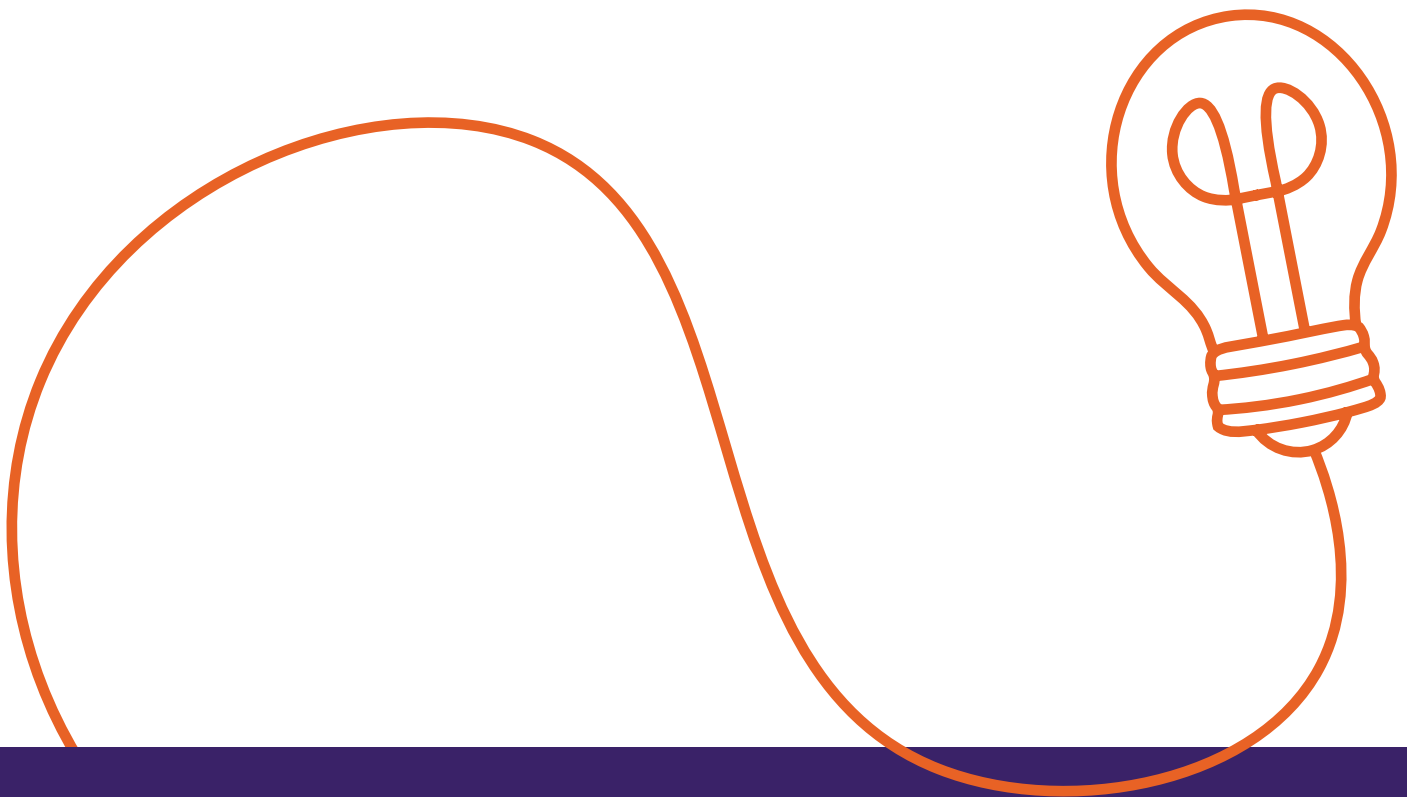
You will get an email with your offer, so make sure to check your emails regularly. You can also check the **Table of Events** page on cao.ie for offer date details.

When do I get my offer?

- **Round 1** offer dates vary each year and are made after the Leaving Cert results have been released (usually sometime in August).
- **Round A** offers – for those not waiting on Leaving Cert results, such as mature students – are generally made in July.
- **Round Zero** offers – for graduate entry medicine candidates and other categories – are usually made in early August.

What do I need to know about accepting an offer?

If you apply for courses from both the Level 8 and Level 6/7 lists, you may get offers from both lists. You can only accept one offer, in any one round. So, if you get more than one offer, you need to choose which offer to accept.



Important!

Accepting a lower preference course in an earlier round does not stop you getting offered a higher preference course in a later round!

Accepting a higher preference offer in a later round automatically cancels your acceptance of the lower preference offer.



College fees and student grants

Do I have to pay tuition fees to go to college?

Most undergraduate students attending publicly funded third-level courses do not have to pay **tuition fees**. The **Free Fees Initiative** means the the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science covers the cost of the fees instead. But you still have to pay the **student contribution**.

You must meet **certain criteria to qualify** for free fees, but you don't need to apply – you're assessed for free fees based on your college application. Tax relief may be available for the **student contribution and tuition fees (if you do have to pay fees)**.



What is the student contribution?

Most colleges charge an annual **student contribution**, also known as a registration fee, which covers student services and examinations. The amount varies depending on the institution.

This is separate to tuition fees, generally covered by the **Free Fees Initiative**.



Getting a student grant

If you are a full-time PLC student or third-level undergraduate, you may qualify for a **student grant**. Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) administers the grant.

The student grant has 2 parts:

1. A maintenance grant, which is a contribution towards your living costs.
2. A fee grant, which can cover all or part of your fees, the student contribution and the cost of essential field trips.

To qualify for a student grant, you must meet all the **conditions of the scheme**, including passing a means test.

There is a special rate of maintenance 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 designated programmes.

How do I apply for a student grant?

Student grant applications usually open in April and close in early November each year. You can make a late application but **only in certain circumstances**.

You apply for a student grant online at **susi.ie**.

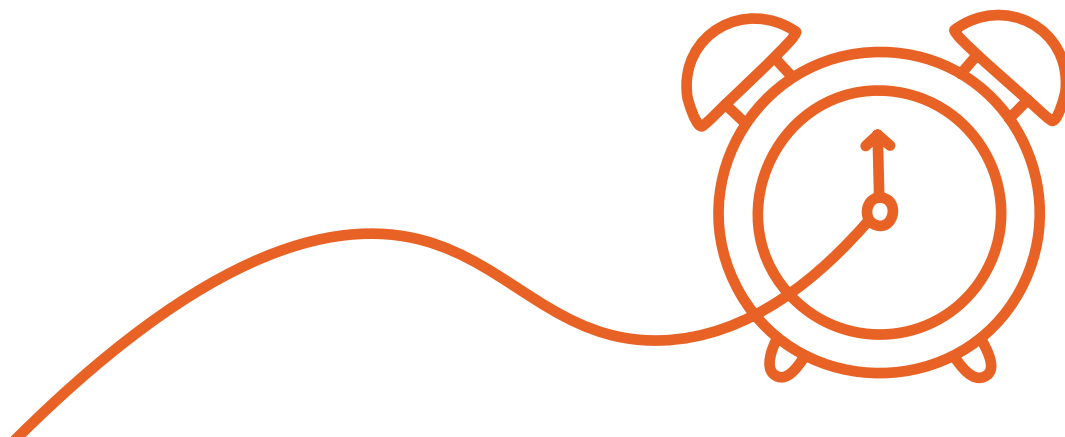
Follow these steps to apply:

1. Check if you're eligible for a grant by looking at the **eligibility criteria** on the SUSI website or by using **SUSI's Eligibility Indicator**.
2. Create an account in the SUSI Student Portal – you'll need your name, date of birth, email address, phone number and PPS number, or register using your verified MyGovID account.
3. Complete and submit your **application form** – make sure all details are accurate and up to date!
4. Send in any requested documents – you will get a checklist letter from **SUSI listing what documents you need**.

Wait for your grant decision – you will get a letter which tells you that you have either been awarded or refused a grant.

Is there a grant for part-time courses?

You can apply for the **part-time fee scheme** if you are studying certain undergraduate courses. The number of credits you take during the academic year determines how much you get from the grant. The part-time fee scheme offers support with fees only and is not a maintenance grant.



How do I know if I qualify for a student grant?

Use **SUSI's Eligibility Indicator** to see if you may qualify. The indicator only applies to full-time courses.

Other financial supports in college

What is the Student Assistance Fund?

The **Student Assistance Fund (SAF)** provides financial support to full-time or part-time students in higher education with financial difficulties. It can help with the cost of books, rent, food and essential travel. It does not cover tuition fees, registration fees or student loan repayments.



What colleges participate in the SAF?

You can find a list of **participating colleges** on the Higher Education Authority website: **hea.ie**. You contact the student services section of your college to apply for the SAF.



What is the Bursary for Care Experienced Young People?

The **Bursary for Care Experienced Young People** is available if you have had care experience of at least six months before you turn 18. It provides financial support towards tuition fees up to a maximum of €2,000.



When can I apply for the Bursary?

You can usually apply between September and October of the year you're attending college. Application details are published on the Tusla website: **tusla.ie**.



What is Back to Education Allowance?

You may qualify for the **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.

What if I want to study farming?

You can get different financial supports to help with the cost of studying farming, such as the **Teagasc Student Maintenance Grant Scheme**.

Managing your money

One of the biggest challenges you will face as an adult, whether you're going to college or not, is learning how to manage your money. Living, travel and household costs are just some of the things you need to manage day-to-day.



Can I get help with managing my money?

The **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)** has **money tools on mabs.ie**, including a budget tool to help you create a budget plan. You can also call MABS on **0818 07 2000** to speak with an adviser.



It is never too early to think about **pensions, savings and investments**. The idea of grappling with pensions or starting a savings account can seem daunting when just out of school but getting into the habit of saving early can have huge benefits later in life.



Top tips to control your spending

Spunout.ie has some tips on **how you can manage your spending**, such as making a weekly meal plan (to avoid convenient but costly takeaways)!



Disability supports in college

What supports can I get in college if I have a disability?

If you have a disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty, tell your college's disability or access service. They can work with you to make sure you have the supports you need for the course you are doing. These supports can range from extra time in exams to assistive technology.

What is the Fund for Students with Disabilities?

The **Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)** is one of the main funding sources for students with certain disabilities. It covers getting things like assistive technology, academic and learning support (including non-medical helpers), and help with transport.



Where do I find my college's disability or access service?

AHEAD works with and for people with disabilities to help shape inclusive environments in education and employment. Find information about dealing with a college's disability or access service on ahead.ie. You can also visit your college's website to find information on their service.



Finding a place to live

While a big part of the college experience is gaining some independence, finding student accommodation isn't easy. Before you decide to move out of home, you should consider certain factors.

1. Find out about your lectures

With blended learning becoming more popular in recent years, you should find out how much blended learning is included in your course and how often you need to be on campus. Some courses have mandatory in-person attendance for some elements (for example, science-related courses often have regular labs on campus).

2. Can you commute?

Figure out if you can commute to college from home instead of moving out. Take into account things like cost and travel time. While commuting is a hassle, it will be cheaper than moving out if you're within a reasonable distance of your college!

How do I find student accommodation?

Some colleges offer on-campus accommodation called student halls, so you should contact the college you're going to and ask about their accommodation and how they allocate it. Check your college's prospectus or website for information on accommodation options for students.



How do I know if my tenancy is registered?

Check the register on the **website of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB)**. Your landlord must register your tenancy with the RTB every year. The RTB also helps resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. If you rent a room in your landlord's home, this does not come under the RTB's remit.

You could also consider renting an apartment or house by yourself or with others. If you're nervous about leaving home for the first time, you could rent a room in a family home.

You can search online for student accommodation or consider renting from a private landlord.

Where to search for accommodation online

CollegeCribbs.ie



Daft.ie



Myhome.ie



Beware rental scams!

Wherever you decide to rent, you should always view the property before you sign a tenancy agreement. Check the credentials of the person providing the property service to make sure they're legitimate.

With so many students seeking accommodation at similar times every year, rental scams are common. Don't be rushed into any decisions when deciding where to rent and beware of offers that seem too good to be true. You can find more tips on renting in college on [rtb.ie](https://www.rtb.ie).

What do I need to know about living away from home?

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.

You have certain rights as a tenant. For example, you're 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.

If you have a **dispute with your landlord**, you should try to resolve it between yourselves. If you can't resolve it, contact Threshold for advice and consider taking the issue to the **RTB's dispute resolution service**. The service covers disputes about deposits, lease terms, termination of tenancies, rent arrears, market rents, complaints by neighbours and more.





Important!

If you are renting student-specific accommodation, you have most of the same rights as most private tenants – but there are **some differences which are important to know**.



What is Threshold?

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**.



Can I get Student Accommodation Assistance?

If you are part of the Traveller or Roma communities, or have had experience of the care system between the ages of 16 and 18 and don't qualify for aftercare allowance, you can apply for **Student Accommodation Assistance**.





Studying abroad

More Irish students are choosing to study abroad each year. Many programmes are taught through English with realistic entry requirements, available places and free or low fees for a good standard of education. Sometimes, the course you want to do is only available, or more easily accessed, by going abroad.

Whatever your reason, studying abroad is a good option for furthering your education.

What do I need to think about when considering studying abroad?

- How to apply for courses in different countries
- College fees and grants you can access to help with costs
- Practical matters, like finding somewhere to live and living expenses

Some countries have a central body that processes college applications, like the CAO does in Ireland. In other countries, you just apply directly to the college. So, check what you need to do to apply once you've found a course you're interested in.



Help with applying to colleges abroad?

EUNiCAS is an independent application support service that helps Irish students access college programmes abroad. EUNiCAS does not charge universities for listing courses in its database.



Can I study in Northern Ireland or the UK?

You can study in Northern Ireland or the UK if you're an Irish citizen and you have been resident in Ireland for three years before the start of your course. You pay college fees in the same way as UK students. You may be eligible for an Irish student grant. **UCAS** is the equivalent to the CAO system in the Republic of Ireland. It manages all the applications for full-time undergraduate courses for universities and colleges across the UK.

Can I get financial support if I study outside of Ireland and the UK?

You can get a maintenance grant under the **Student Grant Scheme** if you're studying in another EU country and meet certain criteria. You can also get the **part-time fee scheme** if you're studying certain undergraduate courses, which can help with the cost of fees.

You can **claim tax relief if you have paid the fees**, either on your own behalf or on behalf of another person. You cannot claim tax relief on any part of the tuition fees that is paid directly or indirectly by a grant, a scholarship or otherwise.

Studying abroad while already in college

You may want to study abroad but not for the whole time you're in college. Your college may have student exchange programmes, which let you swap places with a student from another country.

You can also study abroad through the **Erasmus+ programme**, if you're in at least your second year of college and are studying a recognised degree. Erasmus+ provides funding to cover travel costs and living expenses, but you cover other costs yourself. You cannot apply directly to Erasmus+. You must apply through a participating organisation such as your school or college or place of work.





How do I find courses in Northern Ireland and the UK?

You can search for undergraduate and postgraduate courses on the Study UK website: study-uk.britishcouncil.org.



How do I find courses abroad?

The **International Association of Universities** and **UNESCO** have a **searchable online database** of higher education institutions from around the world – the database has information on admission requirements, how to apply and fees.



How can I find out about other financial supports for studying abroad?

The **International Education Financial Aid (IEFA)** website provides a database of grants, scholarships, loan programmes and other information for students who want to study abroad.





Taking a year out

With so much emphasis placed on going to college, it can be easy to forget you don't have to make that leap straight away. You might want a break after the Leaving Cert, or you may feel like you need some time to figure out what exactly you want to do after school.

Taking a year out from education could be the right option while you decide what's next. When considering taking a year out, you should have a plan for how you're going to spend the year.



What do I need to know before deciding to take a year out?

You can read about things to consider and how to prepare for a gap year on **Spunout.ie**.



Can I defer my college place?

If you have been offered your preferred college course in the CAO but decide you want to take a year out, you can defer accepting your offer. Deferring just means you put off accepting your offer, usually for one year, and your college holds the place for you. Some colleges will only let you defer in certain circumstances.



How do I defer my college place?

You can read about deferring your college place on **citizensinformation.ie**.



Getting a job

Whether you are working while in college, or searching for your first job after leaving education, you need to know how to find a job and your **rights and responsibilities** while you are working.

Working while in college

Going to college can be an expensive time, and you may decide to work part-time to help fund your education. It can be difficult to balance work and college life so you should consider the pros and cons of getting a part-time job.

Pros	Cons
Financial freedom	Limited college experience as less time for extra-curricular college activities, like joining societies
Real-world work experience	Increased stress from juggling two time consuming things
Develop key-skills in a work environment (such as team-building, communication and time management)	Impact on college work – risk of overlapping with your college schedule and study time

When you're looking for work, let your potential employer know that you are a student – they may be able to work around your college schedule.



Getting a job

Whether you're looking for your first job after school or looking for part-time work in college, you can find information about applying for jobs, preparing your CV and doing a job interview on **citizensinformation.ie**.

Finding a job

You may prefer to go directly into the working world instead of continuing in education. You can visit or call your **local Intreo Centre** where you can get information and advice for jobseekers, including a list of job vacancies.

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 other specific **rights under employment law**.

The number
of hours you
can work



Minimum
wage



Breaks
at work



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 from the Workplace Relations Commission.



How do I get a job in the Civil or Public Service?

Find information about Civil Service and Public Service opportunities for school leavers and college graduates on **PublicJobs.ie**.

Paying tax and PRSI

If you are earning enough, 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.

Starting your first job

When you start your first job, you should notify Revenue as soon as possible, or you may have to pay **Emergency Tax**.

You must register for **myAccount** if you have not already done so. When you've logged into myAccount, go to 'PAYE Services' and select 'Add Job or Pension Details' then follow the instruction onscreen. You will need to give:

1. Your new employer's Tax Registration Number (TRN)
2. Your start date
3. How often you will be paid

When you register with Revenue, your employer gets a Revenue Payroll Notification (RPN) which lets them know how much to deduct from your wages. After your first job, if you start a new job, give your PPS number to your new employer and they will register the job with Revenue.

At the end of the tax year, you can use Revenue's myAccount service to see if you have paid the right amount of tax and USC for the year. You can also check to see if the correct tax credits and reliefs were applied.



What is the Workplace Relations Commission?

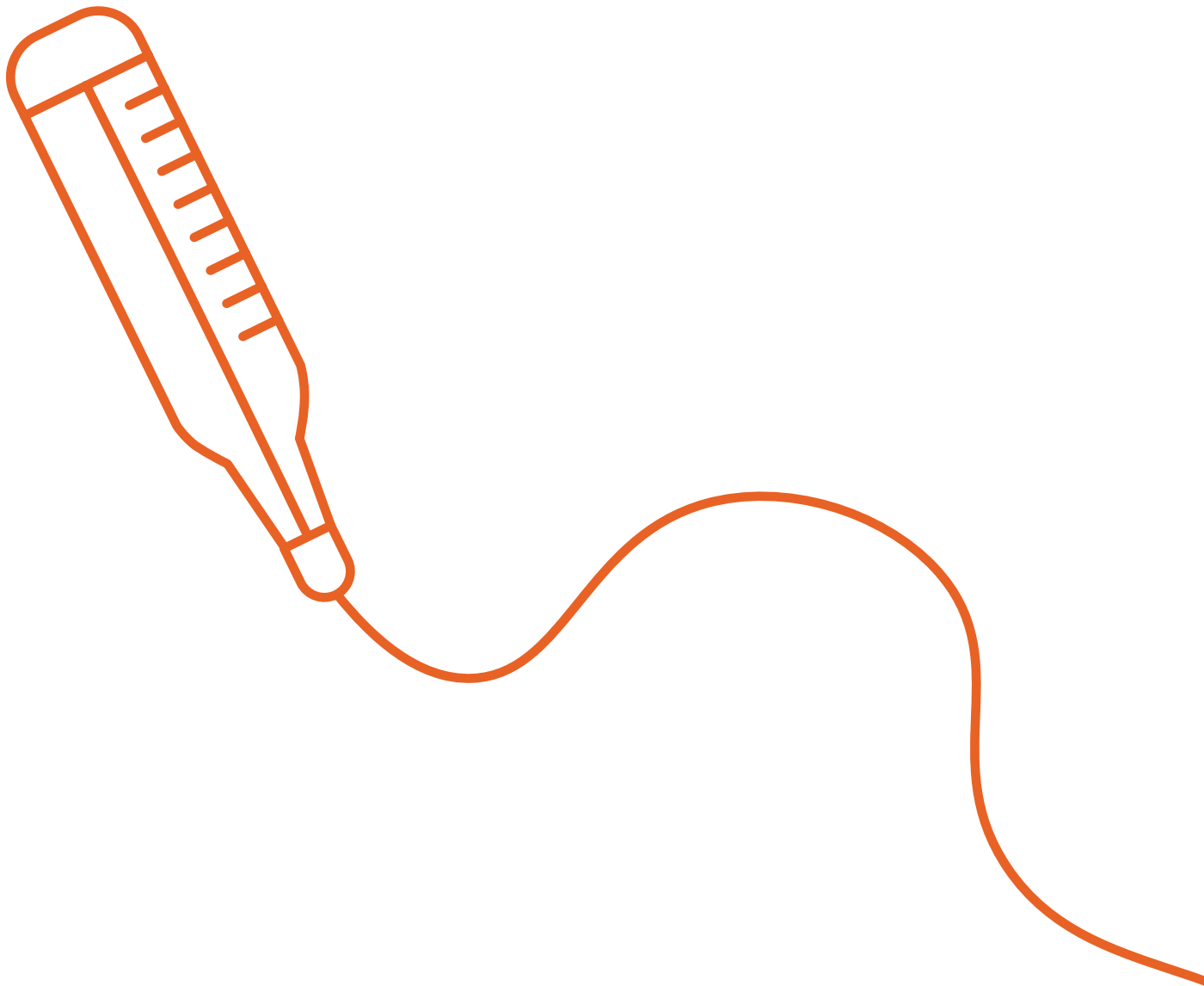
The **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)** deals with industrial relations disputes and employment law disputes. You can phone the WRC's Information and Customer Service line on **0818 80 8090**, or visit **workplacerelations.ie**.

If you are sick

You must tell your employer if you get sick and cannot go to work. If you have worked for the same employer for at least 13 weeks, you have a right to five days' **Statutory 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 your employer for less than 13 weeks, your employer may or may not pay you when you are out sick. If you are on unpaid sick leave, and have enough PRSI contributions, 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 you do not have to pay for that keep your social insurance record up to date.





What else do I need to know about working for the first time?

Find more information about starting your first job on **Revenue.ie**.



What are tax credits and reliefs?

All workers have **tax credits that reduce the amount of tax** they must pay. Tax reliefs can reduce your taxable income, for example, if you pay college fees or medical expenses.



Are there other disability and illness payments?

Find out about disability and illness payments on **citizensinformation.ie**.





Looking after your mental health

I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed...

Leaving school is an anxious time. Between exams, results and deciding what your next move is, you have a lot going on!

It's important to know that it's okay not to be okay. If you find yourself struggling, don't be afraid to ask for help. Talk to family or friends. Talk to your GP.

There are **mental health services and supports for young people in Ireland** that you can reach out to for help, including helplines and advocacy services where you can talk to someone.





Spunout.ie

Spunout.ie has a section dedicated to **information and supports for mental health.**



HSE

The HSE website has a **mental health section** with information on supports and services, and getting urgent help, or you can call the **Your Mental Health information line: 1800 111 888.**



Childline

Childline is a free and confidential service from the ISPCC where you can talk to someone about anything worrying you.

You can use the Childline Chat service or call: **1800 66 66 66.**





Text About It

Spunout.ie runs the **Text About It** service where you can anonymously message a trained volunteer. You can text **50808** or message via WhatsApp. The service is free, but SMS rates may apply if you're texting.



Jigsaw

Jigsaw offers **mental health support and advice** for young people, parents and those working with young people, either online or in person.



Samaritans

Samaritans offers free 24/7 support by phone on **116 123**, or you can email jo@samaritans.ie





Health and sexual health

You may get a **medical card** or a **GP visit card**, if your income is below a certain amount. A medical card entitles you to a range of free health services. A GP visit card allows you to visit your doctor for free.

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

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

There are no longer any public in-patient fees in hospital, so public patients don't have to pay a daily charge to **stay in hospital**. You do have to pay a fee of €100 for visits to hospital emergency departments. There is no charge if you are referred by a GP (bring your referral letter with you).



How do I get a medical card, GP visit card or the Drugs Payment Scheme?

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**.

Your sexual health and wellbeing

The law says that a person must be 17 years of age to be able to consent to engaging in a sexual act. It is a crime to engage in a sexual act with someone who has not given or cannot give consent. It is also a crime to **share intimate images without consent**.

As a student, college might be where you begin exploring sex and your sexuality for the first time. You should be aware of things that can help you take care of your sexual health and wellbeing.

You can get **free contraception** if you are a woman or person with a uterus, aged 17 to 35. You need to visit a doctor to get your free prescription. This visit and any contraception check-ups you need are free. The scheme includes emergency contraception, such as the morning-after-pill, which you can get from your pharmacy without a prescription from a GP. You can get free condoms through sexual health clinics or from your college's student union.

If you are worried about an STI, you should visit your GP, pharmacist or an **STI clinic** for medical advice. 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.

What can I do to look after my sexual health?



Sexualwellbeing.ie

Find out more about sexual health and wellbeing, sexual consent in practice and free contraception and STI kits, on sexualwellbeing.ie.



Spunout.ie

Check out Spunout.ie's **10 tips on how you can look after your sexual health**.



What about unplanned pregnancy?

If you have an **unplanned pregnancy** and need support, there are free confidential services, including counselling, to help you consider your options and get the information you need.

What is the My Options service?

The **My Options** helpline and counselling service offers information and support if you have an unplanned pregnancy.

You can call on **1800 828 010** (or **+353 59 916 5066** if you're calling from outside Ireland). You can also find information on the My Options website, including a **counselling service for men and partners** of somebody who is pregnant.



My Options

The **My Options** helpline and counselling service offers information and support if you have an unplanned pregnancy.

What else do I need to know about Adulting?

Make sure you know your Personal Public Service number

Everyone needs to know about public services and how to access them.

A **Personal Public Service (PPS)** number is a unique number that you use to access public services in Ireland including social welfare, tax, education and health services.



What if I don't know my PPS number?

Contact your **local Intreo Centre** or **local Social Welfare Branch Office** and the staff there can find your number for you.



Get a Public Services Card

You need a **Public Services Card (PSC)** to access social welfare and certain other services (such as **applying for a driving licence**).

To get your PSC, 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.



What is MyGovID?

MyGovID lets you access a range of public services online. There are two types of account: Basic and Verified. With a Verified MyGovID account, you can access all services available on MyGovID, including **applying for a passport** or for the **Student Grant**.

Claiming social welfare benefits

You can get a jobseeker's payment if you are aged 18 or over, unemployed, looking for work and meet certain qualifying conditions.

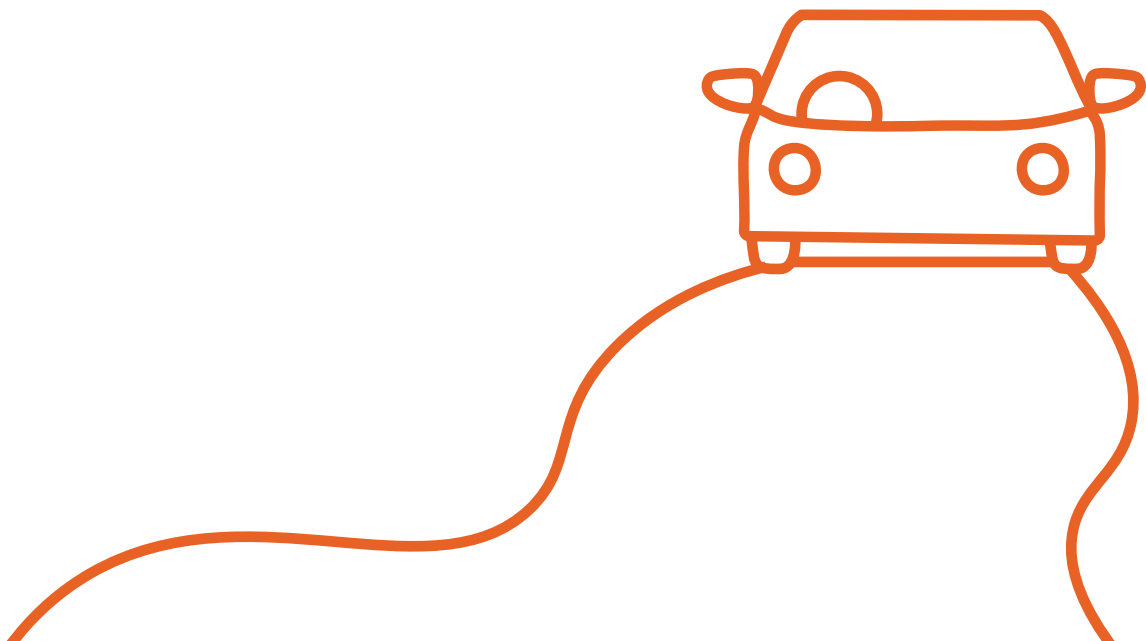
Jobseeker's Allowance is a means-tested payment and you do not need to have paid PRSI to qualify.

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

To qualify for **Jobseeker's Pay-Related Benefit** or **Jobseeker's Benefit**, you must have worked and have enough paid PRSI contributions.

If you are aged over 18 and in financial difficulty, you can apply for a basic weekly **Supplementary Welfare Allowance**. Find a list of offices that provide Supplementary Welfare Allowance on gov.ie, or contact **your local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office**.

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



Learning to drive

There are **four steps to learning to drive** and getting a driving licence: passing the driver theory test, getting a learner permit, practicing driving, and passing the driving test. Driver testing in Ireland is carried out by the **Road Safety Authority (RSA)**.

Getting more information

More from Citizens Information

Find more information about everything covered in this guide from Citizens Information.

citizensinformation.ie



Citizens Information Centres



Citizens Information Phone Service: 0818 07 4000 | Monday to Friday, 9am–8pm

A number of helpful organisations have been mentioned throughout this guide under the relevant sections. Here are some others that you may also find useful.



Coimisiún na Meán

Media regulator for **online safety, television broadcasting and video on-demand services.**

Complaints Contact Centre

Call: 01 963 7755 Monday to Friday
8am–6pm or email usersupport@cnam.ie





Department of Social Protection

Government department that administers Ireland's **social welfare system**.

Call: **01 704 3000** or
email **info@welfare.ie**



Health Service Executive

Manages all the **public health services in Ireland**, including personal social services.

Call: **1800 700 700**



Youth Information Centres

Free, confidential youth information services for young people about various areas, including education and employment. Find your nearest centre on **youthworkireland.ie**, or use the **online chat service**.





citizensinformation.ie



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



Local centres - **locations nationwide**

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 provides the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

Citizens Information Board.

Head Office, George's Quay House,
43 Townsend St, Dublin 2

Telephone: 01 605 9000

Email: info@ciboard.ie

Website: citizensinformationboard.ie

Citizens **Information** Board
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