



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

# Information for School **Leavers**

# Contents

<b>Starting out</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Education and training</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Working</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Health services</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Claiming social welfare benefits</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>At what age can I...?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Further information</b>	<b>17</b>

**This guide is published by the Citizens Information Board.**

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

The Citizens Information Board is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services and for the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

April 2021

Call **0761 07 4000**  
Visit **[citizensinformation.ie](https://citizensinformation.ie)**

# Getting more information

If you are leaving school, this guide is for you. It deals with some of the practical questions about education and employment that you may have at this time. It can only provide a brief overview of the options and schemes available to you.

This guide does not provide information on the changes to schemes or services during the COVID-19 public health emergency - for this information see our **COVID-19 overview** on **[citizensinformation.ie](https://citizensinformation.ie)**.

You can also get information on all the topics covered in this leaflet from the network of Citizens Information Centres and from the national Citizens Information Phone Service on **0761 07 4000**.

You can follow us  
on Facebook  
**@citizensinformation**  
or on Twitter  
**@citizensinfo**



# 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, including social welfare, tax, education and health services. If you do not know your PPS number, contact **your 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. For example, you need a PSC to sit the Driver Theory Test.



To get a 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 allows you to access a range of public services online.

### 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 **rent book**. You also have obligations 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. Its advice centres can help if you need advice about your **rights and obligations as a tenant**. See **threshold.ie** for contact details and opening hours.

Your tenancy must be registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). The RTB provides a webchat facility on its website, **rtb.ie**, where you can ask questions about your rent and tenancy.

### Register to vote

Once you are 18, you can **register to vote** in all elections and referenda. Application forms are available on **checktheregister.ie** or from all local authorities, post offices and public libraries. You should return the completed form to your local authority.

### 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 0761 07 2000 to speak with an adviser.

Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **citizensinformation.ie**

To vote  
get application  
forms on  
**checktheregister.ie**



# Education and training

**There are many opportunities to gain further education, skills and qualifications that can help you get a job.**

You can find information on [qualifax.ie](http://qualifax.ie) about the different courses available. You can take the **interest assessment test** and find courses that fit your interests. 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**. You can go on to further studies at third-level after you complete your PLC course. There is a list of colleges by region on the Education and Training Boards Ireland website: [etbi.ie](http://etbi.ie).

If you intend to continue to **third-level education** in Ireland, you apply through the **Central Applications Office (CAO)**. You register an account with [cao.ie](http://cao.ie) and complete your CAO application form online. The CAO website and handbook gives detailed information on how to apply. See [cao.ie](http://cao.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](http://accesscollege.ie).



**Qualifications help you get a job.**

Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **[citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.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 two elements: 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.

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. If you think you may be eligible for a student grant, you should register with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) online at **[susi.ie](https://www.susi.ie)** as soon as the application process opens on 22 April 2021.

The **Free Fees Initiative** allows you to participate in higher education without paying tuition fees. You will still have to pay the Student Contribution. There is no separate application form for free fees. Your eligibility will be 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.

For more information on financial supports for education, see **[citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie)**.



## 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.

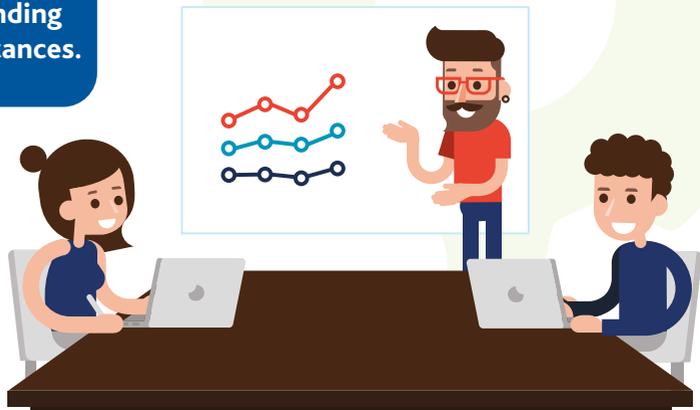
**Apprenticeships** provide on-the-job training with an employer. While you are training on the job for a qualification, your employer will pay you a recommended apprenticeship wage. You can find a list of apprenticeships on **apprenticeship.ie**.

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

The **Youthreach** programme 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 **Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)**. This Scheme provides work placements to young jobseekers (aged 18–24) who are long-term unemployed, or who face barriers to employment.

You may be paid an allowance, depending on your circumstances.



# Working

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

You can find your nearest Intreo Centre on **gov.ie**. The website **jobsireland.ie** also advertises job vacancies and allows you to post your CV online so that employers can access 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** such as the **number of hours you can work, breaks at work, minimum wage and annual leave**. Your **contract** may provide for 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 consider that 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 (059) 917 8990, or visit **workplacerelations.ie**.

Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **citizensinformation.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 a job, you must register the details of your new 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 have a tax credit certificate when you start work, your employer must deduct tax on an emergency basis. When your tax credit certificate arrives, any **tax refund** due will be paid to you by your employer.

All workers have tax credits that reduce the amount of tax they have to pay. Other reliefs can 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 will be able to request an end of year statement through Revenue's myAccount service to **review your tax** and see if you have paid the correct amount of tax and USC for the year.

## If you are ill

You must tell your employer if you get sick and cannot go to work. 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** – your GP (family doctor) should have the application form. If you are not entitled to Illness Benefit you should still send medical certificates 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 on Illness Benefit see the **Social welfare payments** section on **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 travelling to or from work, you should tell your employer immediately and apply for a *declaration of accident at work* using Form IB/OB1 which is available from the Department of Social Protection.



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

Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **citizensinformation.ie**

# Health services

If your income is below a certain amount, you may be eligible for a **medical card**. A medical card entitles you to medical care free of charge. Even if you are not eligible for a medical card, you may qualify for a **GP visit card**. A GP visit card doesn't provide the same range of services as a medical card but does allow you to visit your GP for free.

If you are aged 16 to 25 and you are dependent on your parents, you are eligible for a medical card if your parents have a means-tested medical card. If you are financially independent from your parents, you may be entitled to a medical card or GP visit card if your income is under the limit.

You can apply online for a medical card or GP visit card on **medicalcard.ie** or get an application form from your Local Health Office. For details of your Local Health Office call the Health Service Executive (HSE) information line on (041) 685 0300 or see the website **hse.ie**.

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



# Claiming social welfare benefits

**You may qualify for a social welfare payment, either Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance, if you are aged over 18, 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 download application forms for jobseeker's payments from **gov.ie**. You can also apply online at **MyWelfare.ie**.

To qualify for **Jobseeker's Benefit** you must have paid PRSI contributions for at least two 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 three 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 three 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 administer the supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme on **gov.ie**. or contact your Intreo Centre or local Social Welfare Branch Office.

Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **citizensinformation.ie**



# At what age can I...?

## 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 term-time 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 the public road

**Age 16** – motorbike up to 11kW and up to 125cc, moped with a maximum speed of 45kph, work vehicle such as a tractor or JCB

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

**Age 18** – motorbike up to 35kW, goods vehicles up to 7,500 kg

**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 a 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 parental consent

## Buy cigarettes

**Age 18**

## 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**

## Marry

**Age 18**

## Apply for a 10-year passport

**Age 18** – if you are younger you can only apply for a five-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 referenda

Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)**

## 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

## Make a will

**Age 18**



Call **0761 07 4000**

Visit **[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)**

# Further information

**Citizens Information**  
**[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)**

**Citizens Information Phone Service**

Call: 0761 07 4000  
Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm

**Citizens Information Centres**  
Visit **[centres.citizensinformation.ie](http://centres.citizensinformation.ie)**  
to find your nearest centre.

**Department of Social Protection**  
Information Section  
Call: (071) 919 3302  
**[gov.ie](http://gov.ie)**

**Health Service Executive**  
Information on mental health  
services and supports  
Call: (041) 685 0300  
**[yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie)**

**Jigsaw**  
National Centre for Youth  
Mental Health  
Find your nearest service on  
**[jigsaw.ie](http://jigsaw.ie)**

**Jobs Ireland**  
**[jobsireland.ie](http://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](http://MyOptions.ie)**

**Residential Tenancies Board**

Call: (01) 702 8100

**[rtb.ie](http://rtb.ie)**

**Road Safety Authority**

Information on getting a driving licence.

**[rsa.ie](http://rsa.ie)**

**Spunout**

Information and support for young  
people.

**[spunout.ie](http://spunout.ie)**

**Threshold**

Accommodation advice centres in  
Dublin, Cork and Galway.

**[threshold.ie](http://threshold.ie)**

**Workplace Relations Commission**

Information and Customer Service

Call: (059) 917 8990

**[workplacerelations.ie](http://workplacerelations.ie)**

**Youth Information Centres**

Find your nearest centre on

**[youthworkireland.ie](http://youthworkireland.ie)**



The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through **citizensinformation.ie**, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the network of Citizens Information Services. It is responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and provides the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

## Citizens Information



**citizensinformation.ie**



**0761 07 4000** - Mon to Fri, 9am - 8pm



**Local centres** - 215 locations nationwide

Citizens Information Board Head Office  
Ground Floor, George's Quay House, 43 Townsend St, Dublin 2  
t: 0761 07 9000. e: [info@ciboard.ie](mailto:info@ciboard.ie)

[citizensinformationboard.ie](http://citizensinformationboard.ie)