

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Almost four years have passed since you and your family kindly agreed to be part of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. As you know, *Growing Up in Ireland* is a unique study that follows the progress of the same group of children over time to help improve our understanding of all aspects of children and their development.

We would now like to re-interview you to find out how your child has grown and changed since our last visit, almost four years ago.

A reminder about what *Growing Up in Ireland* is all about ...

Growing Up in Ireland, a national, Government-funded study of children, is the first and most important of its kind ever to take place in this country.

The purpose of the study is to improve our understanding of all aspects of children and their development. It will:

- tell us how children develop over time
- help us to find out what factors affect a child's development
- look at what makes for a healthy and happy childhood and what might lead to a less happy one
- help us to discover what it means to be a parent in Ireland today

This information will help the Government to make decisions on what future policies and services will be most beneficial for children and their families in Ireland.

What has been happening since our last visit?

A total of 8,500 nine-year-old children and their families were interviewed for the first phase of *Growing Up in Ireland*. The first report on this part of the study was published in December 2009.

We have also been busy interviewing the families of 11,000 nine-month-old infants who are also taking part in the study. A report on that part of the study was published in November 2010.

Don't forget that you can keep up to date with all our publications on our website: www.growingup.ie

Why should my family take part in the follow-up interview?

Your continued participation in the study is crucial to help get the most benefit from this research. The real value of this study will come in having *more* information on the *same* children, as this will help us to better understand the changes that take place in children's lives as they grow and, very importantly, why children grow and develop at different rates.

The information collected during the first round of interviews in the main study will be included in a series of reports. The Government can use this information to help make improvements and bring real benefits to children and families for many years to come.

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

Who is running the study?

Growing Up in Ireland is a Government study. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is funding it, in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is overseeing and managing the study, which is being carried out by a group of independent researchers led by the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin.

What happens if I take part in the follow-up interview?

Taking part in the follow-up interview is very simple and is similar to the first interview. An interviewer will contact you to arrange a visit to your home at a time that is convenient for you and your family. As with your first interview, this can be on a weekday, in the evening time if that suits, or during the weekend.

When the interviewer visits your home, you, your child and your spouse/partner (if relevant) will each be asked to fill out separate questionnaires with the interviewer. With your consent, we would also like to administer a short assessment test to your child. This is a standard assessment used widely in research with children. It is straightforward to complete. The results of this test will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of the study. Individual results will not be seen by you or anyone outside the Study Team. The visit to your home will last about 1½ to 2 hours.

If you decide not to take part in the study, it will in no way adversely affect any future health or social care that you or your family will receive from the State.

Confidentiality

As with the previous interview, all the information given to the *Growing Up in Ireland* interviewer is treated in the strictest confidence. It will be used exclusively for research purposes. The information given by your child in answer to the questions on the survey will not be seen by anyone else in your family – not even you will have access to it. Similarly, other participants such as your partner will not see the information you give to us. However, in circumstances in which the people running the study would have serious concerns that your child or other vulnerable person may be a risk, they may have to tell someone who can help.

Under no circumstances could anyone in Government or any government agency or department be able to identify information given by you. The study is being carried out under the Statistics Act (1993). This is the same legislation as is used to carry out the Census of Population and ensures complete confidentiality of all information collected.

We will use an ID number on your questionnaire. This will help to ensure that your information is kept anonymous.

The information you provide will have your name, address and other identifying information removed. It will then be stored on a computer so that it will be available to researchers. The information can be used only for research purposes. It would be an offence to use it for any other reason.

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

What kind of questions will my family be asked?

Similar to our last interview, you and your partner (if relevant) will be asked questions about:

- your child's health and education
- his/her emotional health and wellbeing
- your own health
- your family life and experiences as a parent

Your child will be asked questions about:

- his/her home and school life
- his/her interests and the activities he/she enjoys
- his/her relationship with you, siblings and friends

All the questions are very straightforward though some are quite detailed and some will address relatively sensitive issues such as your family's income, your relationship with your partner (if relevant) and so on. The interviewer will be able to help out if you have any concerns or questions about the actual survey questionnaire itself.

Following up in a few years' time:

At this point, it is undecided if there will be a further round of follow-up interviews. However, it is possible that we may wish to return to your household again when your child is 15 years old.

In the meantime, we will keep you up to date on the progress of the study results and the possibility of a further interview through our newsletter *GUI News*.

Who are the interviewers?

The interviewer who will call to your home is from the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI). S/he is an Officer of Statistics appointed by the Central Statistics Office – similar to the interviewers who carry out research on behalf of the Central Statistics Office, including the Census.

Each interviewer carries a photo ID card.

Each interviewer has been specially trained for the study and has been vetted by An Garda Síochána.

The interviewer is not allowed to be alone with your child at any time during her/his visit to your home.

If you are unhappy with the way in which the survey has been conducted or with the interviewer, or would like to confirm her/his identity, please contact the *Growing Up in Ireland* team at 01- 8632000.

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

What are my rights if I take part?

- **You and your family may choose to withdraw from the study at any time, even after the interviewer has called to your home.** At that stage, if requested, we would delete all information previously collected about you.
- If there are any questions on the questionnaire you do not wish to answer, you do not have to do so.

Your participation counts ...

Just as before, taking part in *Growing Up in Ireland* is voluntary. Your participation will play a major role in the success of the study.

It is only by carrying out studies such as these that we can understand the role of all caring adults in the life of a child and find out how we can improve the future for all children and families in Ireland.

We hope that you can support us in our work and we would like to thank you, in anticipation, for your help.

Where can I find out more information?

Phone: Freephone 1800 200 434

or contact our Communications Officer, Jillian Heffernan, on 01 896 3378
or call 01 8632000 and ask for the *Growing Up in Ireland* team

Visit our website: www.growingup.ie

Email us at growingup@esri.ie

Post to:

Growing Up in Ireland,
Economic & Social Research Institute,
Whitaker Square,
Sir John Rogerson's Quay,
Dublin 2

