

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Over two years have now 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 following the progress of the same group of children over time to help improve our understanding of all aspects of children and their development.

Your child was one of over 11,000 children and their families who took part in the first phase of the study. We would like to re-interview you to find out how your child has grown and changed since our last visit.

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

Growing Up in Ireland is a national, Government funded study of children and 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 11,000 families of 9-month-old infants were interviewed in the first phase of the study and we have been busy analysing all that information. The first report on the 9-month-old children will be published at the end of 2010. You may have seen the first results from our other group of children, the 9-year-olds, which were published in December 2009.

Don't forget that you can keep up-to-date with all of 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 it will help us better understand the changes which happen 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 used in a series of reports which the Government can use to help make improvements and bring real benefits for children and families for many years to come.

Who is running the study?

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

The Office of the Minister for 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 very similar to your first interview.

Step One: An interviewer will contact you to make arrangements to come back and interview you and your spouse/partner (where relevant).

Step Two: When the interviewer calls to your home, you and your partner (if relevant) will each be asked to fill out a separate questionnaire with the interviewer. The visit to your home will last about two hours.

Step Three: Now that your child is a little older we would like to get him/her involved in the study. With your consent we would like to administer two short assessment tests to your child. The first is a short task which involves showing your child some pictures and asking him/her to name the items in those pictures. The second involves the child matching shapes. Both of these tests are used very widely in research with children. Most children like doing them but there is no problem in stopping them at any point if your child doesn't like them. They will take about 20 minutes. Your child will need to be awake and alert for this part of the visit. The results of these tests will be kept strictly confidential and are only for the purposes of the study. Individual results will not be seen by you or your family or anyone outside the Study Team.

Step Four: If there is another parent living outside the home or someone else, such as a childminder, who looks after the child on a regular basis, we would, with your permission, like to send them a short questionnaire in the post.

If you decide not to take part in the study it will in no way adversely affect any future health or social care which 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 partner, childminder, and so on will not be seen by anyone – not even you will have access to it. Similarly, other participants such as your partner will not see the information you give to us.

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 and 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.

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 temperament
- his/her daily routines
- your own health
- your family life and experiences as a parent

All the questions are very straightforward though some are quite detailed and some will address relatively sensitive issues like your family's income, your relationship with your partner (if relevant) and so on. The study 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 in time 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 five 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*.

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Who are the Interviewers?

The interviewer who will call to your home is from the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI). He/she is an Officer of Statistics appointed by the Central Statistics Office and is 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 his/her 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 his/her identity, please contact the *Growing Up in Ireland* team at 01- 8632000.

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.

What do I do next?

An interviewer will call to your home to discuss the study with you, and you can tell him or her whether or not you would like to take part.

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

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