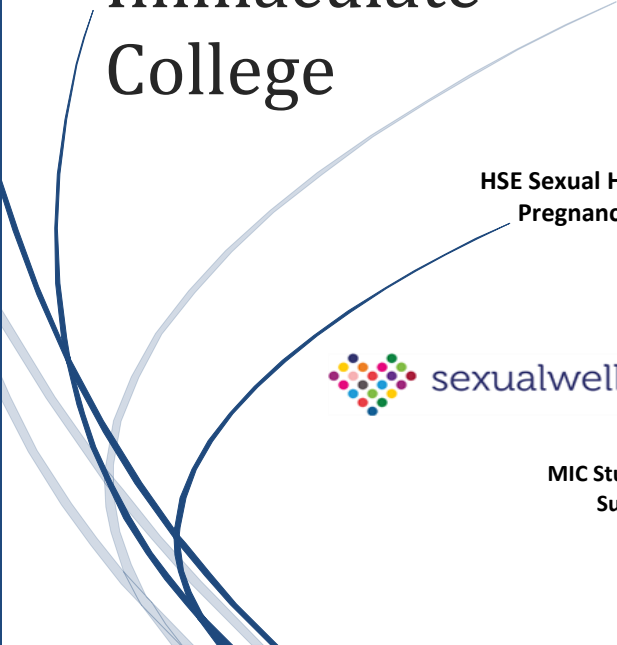


HANDBOOK for Students who experience Crisis Pregnancy and Expectant/Student Parents at Mary Immaculate College



HSE Sexual Health & Crisis
Pregnancy Programme
(SHCPP)



sexualwellbeing.ie

MIC Student Parents
Support Service



This handbook is based on the Student Parent Support Service (SPSS) at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) which has been funded by the [HSE Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme \(SHCPP\)](#) since 2007.

The service provides dedicated support to a key target group namely students who experience an unplanned or crisis pregnancy while at college and those who return to college following an unplanned or crisis pregnancy. The service also provides general support to student parents. For more information visit myoptions.ie

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- *This handbook is a revised version of the original 'Information Guide for Student Parents and Expectant Parents at Third Level' which was launched nationally in November 2012, disseminated to all Irish third level institutions and published on the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme website;*
- *The information in this handbook is not to be considered medical or legal advice. Specific medical or legal advice should be obtained from a registered health or legal professional;*
- *Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information included in this handbook is accurate, no responsibility can be accepted by MIC or the HSE SHCPP. All information is correct at time of printing;*
- *This handbook, or any portion thereof, may not be reproduced or used in any manner without the express permission of its authors.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Student Parent Support Service targets and supports students who experience an unplanned or crisis pregnancy as well as expectant parents and student parents at Mary Immaculate College. The [HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme](#) fund the service, which began in October 2007.

The Coordinator of the service is Nicola Hurley who provides practical and emotional support in a confidential, non-directive and non-judgemental manner.

Nicola also facilitates a weekly drop-in space specifically for expectant parents and student parents at MIC. This takes place every Wednesday morning during semester time in the [Chaplaincy Hospitality](#) Room, Floor 1, Tara Building, 11am–12:30pm.

The drop-in space aims to provide an opportunity for student parents to meet each other and to avail of a mix of workshops and information sessions.

'The handbook contained information I was not aware of and allowed me to ensure I was fully informed throughout my pregnancy.'

BA Student Parent

This handbook is based on the original *Information Guide for Student Parents and Expectant Parents at Third Level* which was researched and disseminated by the service in 2011 and launched nationally in November 2012. This revised version incorporates changes to the service, updated financial and social welfare information as well as relevant issues that have been highlighted through supporting this cohort of students in more recent years.

The handbook may be used as a first port of call for information on the service and to access information on the supports available.

'Each aspect of the service is invaluable in its own way - having a constant support that you can touch base with at any time.'

BA Student Parent

While the service primarily targets students experiencing an unplanned or crisis pregnancy and students returning to MIC and parenting following an unplanned pregnancy, one-to-one support is also available to student parents who experience unforeseen circumstances or crisis while at MIC.

Student parents are encouraged to make contact with the Coordinator of the service (Nicola Hurley) to explore the relevant supports within the College and outside agencies. Nicola will meet individual students in confidence and work with them to put a plan in place, both in the short-term and perhaps more long-term if required.

Nicola is based within the Medical Centre on the third floor of the Tara Building. The service is available to students on three days each week during the semester.

For an appointment please text ‘appointment’ with your name to 087 9501160 or email Nicola at nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie

Nicola will endeavour to arrange an appointment that suits your timetable within the week or the following week. As appointments are limited, it is advisable to make contact early in the week if possible.

The key objective of the service is to provide on-going support to students who experience an unplanned or crisis pregnancy while at MIC.

The service also offers a variety of supports and information to ensure students are up-to-date and aware of the supports and services that are available to them. This includes information in relation to academic options on a case-by-case basis, whether a student wishes to continue with college or take time out for a while.

'It can be very rewarding to return to college as a new mother, but I would advise anyone in my situation in the future to really think about it before leaping in.

Maybe ask yourself, "would it really be so bad to take a little time out?"

Little infants grow up so fast, it's not time that you can ever get back.'

BA Student Parent

'I was very nervous about coming back to college as a person who was pregnant and single as I had the impression that Mary I. was very traditional and that this would be frowned upon.

I have to say honestly, that the total opposite was my experience. Everyone was so helpful.'

Post Grad. Student Parent

EARLY PREGNANCY AT COLLEGE

The primary focus of the Student Parent Support Service is to provide dedicated support to students who experience an unplanned or crisis pregnancy while they are studying at Mary Immaculate College.

Be gentle on yourself...

No matter how you feel about your pregnancy, you may be overwhelmed with questions. It is a good idea to give yourself time to process how you are feeling.

Whether a pregnancy is planned or unplanned, it is life-changing. It may even represent a crisis for you and others such as your partner or members of your family.

Sometimes a planned pregnancy can develop into a crisis due to a change in circumstances (e.g. work, college, finance etc.). It can be very difficult to voice this and to seek support.

The Student Parent Support Service offers dedicated support within MIC where you can meet the Coordinator on a one-to-one basis. Nicola will provide a supportive space for you to adjust to your news and will help you to explore and identify the supports you may require.

First things first – confirm your pregnancy

Once you have taken a positive pregnancy test, the next step is to see your doctor. This is important for two reasons – to have your pregnancy confirmed and to ensure you are well.

As a registered MIC student, you may attend the College Medical Centre to confirm your pregnancy. This may provide an option particularly if you do not wish to see your family GP at this time. While ongoing prenatal care is not available in MIC it is a good idea to register your pregnancy with the Medical Centre in case you need medical attention while in college.

Pregnancy counselling and support at MIC

The Coordinator, Nicola Hurley, is a qualified counsellor and has specialised training in crisis pregnancy counselling from NUI Maynooth.

Pregnancy counselling gives you space and time in which to explore your feelings about your pregnancy and to discuss all the options that are available to you.

It is really important to take time to consider all your options.

Nicola's role is to provide a safe and supportive space to help you explore your feelings around your pregnancy. The service offers a confidential and non-judgemental space, by appointment, to support this exploration of your options at your own pace.

This safe and supportive space will give you time to adjust and to explore options so that you can make a fully informed decision.

For an appointment, all you need to do is text 'appointment' with your name to 087 9501160 or email Nicola at nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie

All correspondence is treated in confidence and Nicola will endeavour to organise an appointment that suits your timetable as soon as possible.

Crisis pregnancy counselling/accessing information

For more specific information about available support services with regard to an unplanned pregnancy myoptions.ie provide details of organisations that will offer you information and support (**free text LIST to 50444**). Services from these organisations are free of charge.

Support for now

During this time, you may need additional emotional and practical support in continuing to attend lectures and complete assignments. The Student Parent Support Service, the MIC Counselling service and the Medical Centre can help you; dependent on your particular needs. There are lots of support options, don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help, or to confide in a close friend or family member.

**STUDENT PARENT SUPPORT
SERVICE**

*SPSS Office in Medical Centre
(3rd Floor Tara Building)*

*If you need an appointment please
text '**appointment**' with your name
to **087 9501160** or email:
nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie*

COUNSELLING SERVICE

(T311 or T312 Tara Building)

*Drop- in hour; 11 am-12 noon Monday to Friday is available to students, no
appointment needed)*

Student counsellors:

Nessa Breen ☎061 204 919 / Brid O'Connell ☎061 204 948

MEDICAL CENTRE

(3rd Floor Tara Building)

*10am–12noon & 2pm–4pm Monday to Friday
Reception ☎061 204 343*

Emotional support

Whatever you decide in relation to your pregnancy, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Coordinator, Nicola Hurley, for non-judgemental and non-directive support.

Her role is to help you to cope with the rollercoaster of emotions you may be feeling and to support you.

It is important to remember this dedicated support is available to you on an on-going basis and Nicola can meet with you regularly if you wish. She can also assist with your queries and concerns and reduce the sense of pressure to ensure you do not feel overwhelmed.

Coping with the early weeks of pregnancy and college

You may feel pleased to find out you are pregnant, you may feel completely numb, you may feel very upset, worried or somewhere in-between. You may feel unsure about everything right now and that is okay.

It is likely you will have lots of questions and concerns; some may appear urgent and immediate while others may be dealt with later.

It's good to talk. Don't feel you have to keep this to yourself. If you share with someone else, this will help you cope.

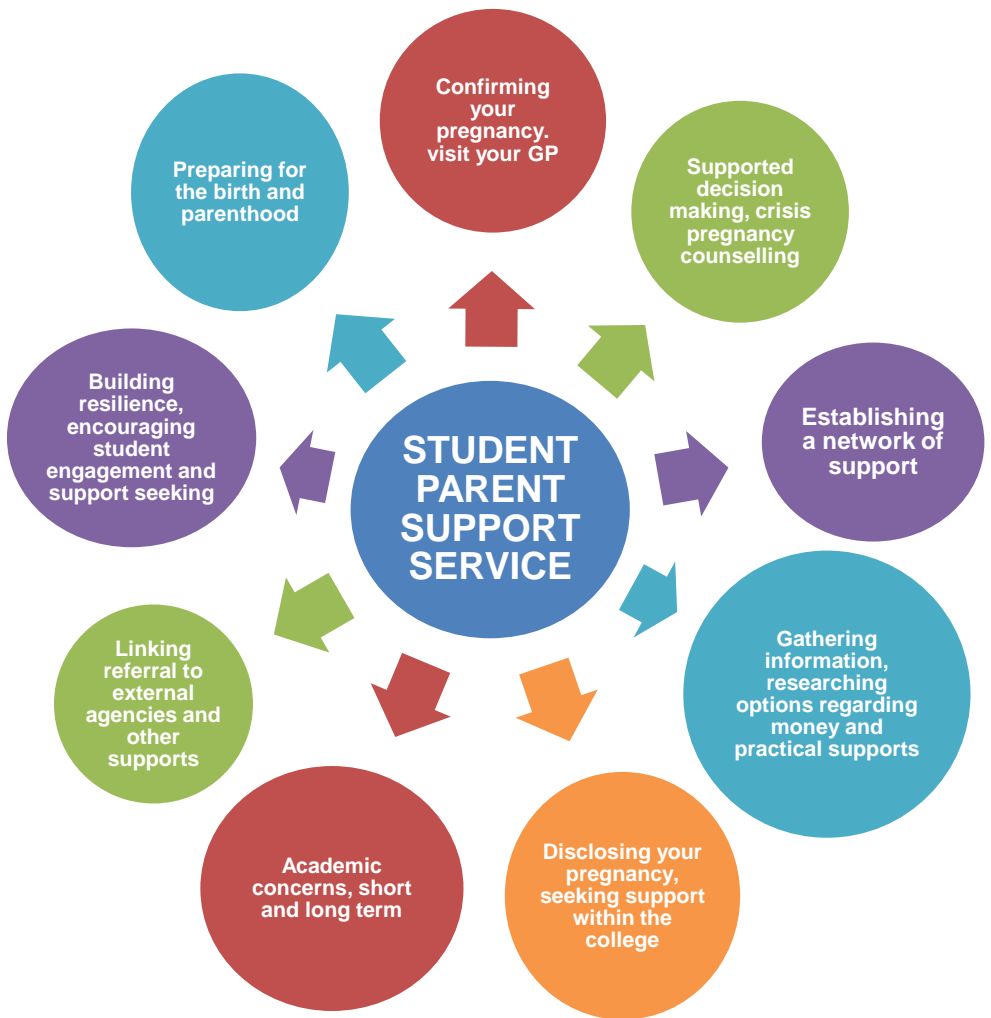
If you feel you are not ready to talk to your partner, family or friends just yet, do call the Nicola for support, or speak with someone in college such as the college nurses or counsellors.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know where to start. Meeting with Nicola at this stage can help to reduce the sense of pressure and stress you may be feeling by helping to clarify **what is most important for you right now**.

It is worth remembering that hormonal changes due to pregnancy may cause heightened emotions and extreme tiredness. This may add to your sense of feeling overwhelmed and is quite normal.

*Student Parent Support Service
SPSS Office in Medical Centre
(3rd Floor Tara Building)*

*If you need an appointment please text 'appointment'
with your name to 0879501160 or email:
nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie*



Relationships and your support network

Relationships can be complicated and multi-layered.

You may be in a long-term relationship or together only a few months, it may be a casual relationship or you may have just met prior to pregnancy and are no longer together.

During these early weeks you may also be trying to figure out your relationship and where pregnancy fits into your plans. This can be complex and may impact your decision-making process and who you decide to tell.

In the heat of the moment, when emotions are high, things can be said that may be hurtful and difficult to resolve later...

It is important to remember that there are a number of parenting options including shared parenting, parenting with your own family and solo parenting. Also, your plans may change over time depending on what decisions you make. Try to take your time to gather information and explore your options. It helps to have clear information and to be fully informed before you make any decisions. This is one of the ways in which you can support yourself.

It may help at this stage to inform yourself of the various legal issues involved such as [guardianship](#), [access/custody](#), [maintenance](#) and [registration of births](#).

For up-to-date and clear information, visit www.treoir.ie. This website has a wide range of resources specifically for parents not married to each other. Other agencies such as [One Family](#), [Solo.ie](#), and the [Free Legal Advice Centre](#) (FLAC) are also excellent resources.

Disclosing Your Pregnancy

How and when you decide to tell people about your pregnancy is up to you. Your decision about the pregnancy may influence how, when and who you tell.

It is important to take the time to adjust and to decide what it will mean for you. It is equally important to seek support and not to feel alone, especially if your pregnancy was unexpected.

When you feel ready it is better for you to tell some college friends.

The very fact that someone sitting alongside you knows you are pregnant can help.

If and when you do decide to tell people, remember that those closest to you may also need a chance to get used to the idea and it can take them time to adjust.

Whatever you decide about your pregnancy telling someone for the first time can make your pregnancy feel real and tangible. Be gentle on yourself.

Most parents do want to help even if their first reaction may not show it.

Like you, they may need time to adjust to the news of your pregnancy.

There is always someone to talk to, while you may or may not have a partner to tell, you may be able to speak with one or both of your parents or a close friend or relative. Seek out the people who will support you. For example, it may help to have someone close with you for support when you first speak to your parents if your pregnancy was unplanned and you are still living at home.

Try to think ahead, choose a time and place that will ensure there is enough time to sit down and talk.

You also can read the experiences of other expectant parents on www.rollercoaster.ie.

In addition to your family, your network of friends can be invaluable whatever your decision about your pregnancy may be. In pregnancy (and parenting) it is never too early to start building your own support network.

At some point when you are ready, you may also like to meet other expectant parents at MIC and hear about their experiences.

You are not the only expectant parent in college at this time. Try to come along to the Student Parent Group which is facilitated by Nicola and takes place every Wednesday morning during semester time.

This is an ideal opportunity to meet with other expectant students and student parents, and where sharing of experiences and concerns can be helpful and supportive.

If you have decided that you are continuing with your pregnancy, it is advisable to start taking folic acid straightaway.

PRACTICALITIES OF PREGNANCY IN COLLEGE

Finance

First and foremost, make a list of your questions. It is unlikely you will be eligible for any payments until your baby is born but you can start to gather information and application forms. Getting organised and being pro-active will help to give you a focus, particularly in the early months.

Much will depend on whether or not you are in a relationship, if you plan to co-habit, share or solo parent. Don't assume you are not eligible, the rule of thumb is if in doubt, apply anyway! The Student Parent Support Service can help you explore your options and identify supports for which you may be eligible, linking and directing you to other agencies and support services as appropriate to your needs.

If you are struggling financially during your pregnancy, you can talk to Nicola about the MIC Student Parent Welfare Fund. You will be encouraged to apply for funding towards your hospital bag later in your pregnancy.

You may also be referred to further funding schemes such as the ESF Student Assistance Fund if you are struggling with other costs such as college materials, travel, rent etc.

Academic concerns

Finding out you are pregnant in the middle of assignments or exams is particularly challenging. Whether or not your pregnancy was planned, it can be almost impossible to concentrate or focus on your studies if you still adjusting to your news and struggling with the early symptoms of pregnancy.

While study can provide a means of distraction, self-care is paramount. This is not the time to set crazy goals or put yourself under unnecessary pressure. Avail of the support on offer, talking to someone can help you to identify what might reduce the pressure and give you space to process your feelings.

Practical supports that you may not have been aware of can also be explored such as requesting an extension for an assignment that is due.

The Student Parent Support Service is here to help you explore all of the options and to provide both practical and emotional support.

Other MIC supports may also be helpful at this time. Nicola can help you identify, access, and refer you to these services both within and outside the College. You may wish to seek support in relation to why the pregnancy is a crisis for you – the MIC Counselling Service offers a daily drop-in hour from 11am to 12noon where you can meet a counsellor without the need for an appointment.

Education options

Your options will depend on when your baby is due and your individual circumstances. You may not realise that there are **options** and **flexibility** within the academic regulations. This is on a case-by-case basis and will usually involve meeting with academic faculty to discuss the options available to you. The Student Parent Support Service can support you in your decision-making at this time. Nicola can provide a space for you to explore your plans and what might work best for you, she can also link you with academic faculty and liaise with them on your behalf, if you wish.

While it is a good idea to start exploring your options, you do not have to decide right now about your plans for college.

It is important to take time to consider all of the options in relation to college, do your research and talk to others where possible.

Leave of Absence (LOA) is always a viable option and there is plenty of time to think about this. It is important to remember that your options will ultimately depend on your due date and the support that is available to you from family and friends.

LOA can be granted for a semester or for the full academic year.

A short LOA period can also be considered; during this period of absence you are responsible for the completion of all areas of study and course requirements.

Documentation requirements depend on whether you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate student and your programme of study. Specific forms must also be completed for readmission to college after LOA.

See [here](#) for further information regarding LOA procedures. It is important to consider all the variables as you weigh up your college options e.g. finances, grant, childcare etc.

Placement may also be an issue to consider with regard to health and safety and planning. It may be feasible to take a year out in first or second year whereas if you are in your final year, your priority may be completing your degree programme. You may wish to consider taking the first year out with your baby and this may change at various stages depending on how you feel.

You do not need to decide anything right away.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE – VARIABLES TO CONSIDER. . .

- *Your due date (or that of your partner);*
- *If you are feeling well or if there are pregnancy concerns;*
- *Your support network such as family and friends;*
- *Logistics such as distance from College;*
- *Your childcare plan;*
- *If you are in receipt of a SUSI grant or social welfare entitlements.*

If you decide to apply for LOA you will need to consider your tuition fees in conjunction with the timing of your LOA. This is because once your tuition fees are paid to MIC by SUSI your options with regard to the Student Grant Scheme are limited.

Regular contact with the Student Parent Support Service is encouraged to ensure you are fully informed and aware of the timelines involved.

Nicola can liaise with Student Academic Administration and other college departments on your behalf **but only if she is kept up-to-date with your plans and decisions.**

MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT LOSE YOUR GRANT!

It is your responsibility to engage with Student Academic Administration; if you wish to be supported by the Student Parent Support Service, it is your responsibility to stay in contact with the service and keep Nicola in the loop – she will not be able to support you fully or ensure you are fully up-to-date otherwise!

Signposting & linking you with other supports

The service has been supporting expectant students and student parents for almost a decade. The key objective of the service has always been to ensure students experiencing and unplanned or crisis pregnancy (and student parents) are aware of and in receipt of all the relevant supports and entitlements. Ultimately, the aim is to support student progression and retention and to ensure student parents are empowered to reach their academic goals.

The service also provides support for students who are already parents as they juggle the challenges of study and family.

Practical supports for student parents

Nicola can meet you and help identify the supports you may need to deal with any challenges or changes you experience as a parent in order to continue in college.

You may also wish to engage with other support services at this time. Nicola can help you identify, access, and refer you to services both within and outside the College.

When things don't go to plan

Pregnancy and parenting can be unpredictable and unexpected events may occur.

You may need to engage in a deeper level of emotional support. The [MIC Counselling Service](#) is based in T311/T312 in the Tara Building and available free of charge to all students. They provide a daily drop-in hour from 11am to 12pm where you can meet with a counsellor initially and explore if you wish to engage with the service.

Changing circumstance

Relationship break-up

Pregnancy ends

Depression during pregnancy

Postnatal depression

Health Issues

Limited family support

Financial issues

Accommodation concerns

A low-cost counselling service is available close to MIC at [Limerick Social Services Centre, Henry Street](#). Tel: 061-31411.

This may be option if you wish to attend counselling out of semester time and require more long-term support.

If you are feeling down and unable to cope, it is strongly recommended that you tell someone and seek support from the MIC Medical Centre or the Counselling Service.

You can make an appointment and discuss your concerns with Nicola; she can link you with other internal or external support services and she will help you to put a plan in place in the short-term also.

MIC MEDICAL CENTRE

(3rd Floor, Tara Building)

Reception - Tel: 061 204 343

Monday to Friday

10am-12pm (meet with nurse)

2pm-4pm (Doctors' appointments)

If you continue to struggle, it is really important to tell your GP. If this is not possible, you may wish to make an appointment to meet with the College Doctor. As the Student Parent Support Service is located within the Medical Centre, this can be arranged through the service.

MAKING THE TRANSITION/RETURNING TO COLLEGE AS A STUDENT PARENT

Reviewing options and plans

Fortunately, plans made in the first months of your pregnancy are not set in stone! There is scope to review once your baby arrives and you may feel differently about earlier decisions.

It is important to review your plans and to give yourself a chance to adjust to your new role as a parent.

Having a baby is life-changing. You should not feel under pressure to do anything you feel is not right for you and your family. If, and when, you choose to return to college, it is important to make sure that decision is right for you.

Although childcare and financial concerns are key considerations in continuing with college your health and well-being and your baby's health is the priority.

The Student Parent Support Service can help you to identify and access supports and services within and outside the College, whatever your decision. The service will support you to put a plan in place, based on your own individual circumstances, so that you can continue with college if that is feasible.

Plans may be reviewed at any time and it is recommended that you stay in contact and engage with the Student Parent Support Service to ensure you are fully informed, supported and up-to-date. It is not possible for the Coordinator to support you or advocate for you if she is not kept in the loop regarding your decisions. If you decide to continue with college after your baby is born, it is strongly recommended that you engage regularly with the service for support. Students returning from leave of absence, or after having a baby during the summer, are encouraged to make an appointment with Nicola prior to, or during Week 1 for support.

Communication/stay connected

The service offers a range of supports and can be accessed in a variety of ways including:

Face Book

- Facebook is the main communications channel of the service and may be accessed [here](#).



Text Messages

- This allows the service to send updates via text to students who have provided their mobile numbers to the service. As it is not always possible to send regular updates students are encouraged to access the SPSS Facebook page.

Expectant Students/Student Parent Group

- Group weekly drop-in session during semester time¹;
- Telephone and e-mail support (particularly for students off campus due to placement).

Family friendly events in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College Students' Union (MISU)

- See here for picture gallery ([Christmas Party](#); [Easter Activities](#)).

Children on Campus

As a student parent, your children are welcomed and encouraged on the College campus. However, appropriate precautions and limitations on visitation are necessary to protect their health and safety.

¹ Each Wednesday Chaplaincy Hospitality room 11am-12:30pm; T207, Tara Building.

Safety is a primary concern when considering the presence of children (i.e. those under 18) on the College campus. Children, other than registered College students, are permitted on the College campus but only while in the care of an adult parent, guardian or a designated child-care person. College policy with regard to children on campus can be seen [here](#).

Nursery Facilities

There is a Nursery room on campus for student parents who wish to feed/change their baby (Residents Block, Third Floor, Room 49). This is a comfortable room specially equipped with suitable furniture, a changing unit, and refrigerator. Please contact the Student Parent Support Service directly if you wish to access this space.

Childcare

Remember to factor in time for 'settling-in' so that both you and your child have time to adjust to childcare arrangements. Most crèches have a settling in policy which usually requires building up time spent in crèche over a 2-week period.

'The timetable (BA) changes each semester as do tutorials - so when picking subjects, it is not just timetable orientated [re Childcare].'

BA Student Parent

You need to consider that your individual lecture/tutorial schedule will change each semester and from year to year. As a result, your daily childcare requirements may also change. It is important therefore not to choose subjects based on your current timetable and/or your childcare arrangements.

PRACTICAL TIPS FROM STUDENT PARENTS OVER THE YEARS....

- *'Make sure your mobile has credit, always on, and charged up.'*
- *'Key in the mobile number for SPSS in case you need to contact the service for support/assistance (087-9501160).'*
- *'Always be prepared to drop tools if your childcare provider needs you.'*
- *'Make time for sterilisation of bottles and pumping (if breastfeeding) each morning.'*
- *'Treat each day as a 9-5 and try getting all study done on campus so evenings and weekends can be quality time with your family.'*
- *'Having other peers to bounce ideas off and work through problems is an important part of the study process.'*
- *'Start your assignments as soon as you get them. Your final draft will most likely look nothing like the first draft and assignments require more time than most student parents have to give them. By starting them in a timely fashion you elevate a lot of stress and anxiety.'*
- *'Make a realistic study plan and stick to it.'*
- *'Find somebody who is like-minded to you.'*
- *'Having someone reliable to bounce ideas/thoughts off helps you both.'*

LIMERICK CITY COMMUNITY CRÈCHES²	CONTACT	TEL. NUMBER
LEDP, Family Tree Crèche, Limerick. Enterprise Development Partnership, Roxboro Rd, Limerick	Jean Cleary	061 317618
Social Services Community Crèche, Henry Street, Limerick.	Linda O'Donnell	061 315519
Northside FRC King's Island Crèche, Verdant Place, Limerick	Liana Doyle-Higgins	061 319902
Moyross Community Crèche, Moyross Community Centre, Moyross, Limerick	Lisa Flanagan	061 321152
Tait House Crèche (formerly Southill Children's Nursery) Tait House, Roxboro Rd, Limerick.	Therese Gaffney	061 313019
Child World Crèche, Our Lady of Lourdes, Childers Road, Rosbrien, Limerick.	Michelle O'Doherty	061 303472
Sunshine Crèche, St. Munchin's Resource Centre, 26/28 Clonconnane Rd, Ballynanty, Limerick.	Alison Steve	061 326623
Magical Playground Crèche, Southill Community Centre, Limerick.	Margaret Terry	061 603713

² This is not the complete listing of Limerick City Community Crèches - see [here](#) for a complete listing compiled by the Limerick Childcare Committee.

LIMERICK COUNTY COMMUNITY CRÈCHES³	CONTACT	TEL. NUMBER
Banogue Community Crèche, Banogue, Croom, Co. Limerick.	Amanda Jordan	061 602818
Kilcolman Community Crèche, St. Coleman's Childcare Services, Kilcolman, Ardagh, Co. Limerick.	Grainne Fitzgibbon	069 60770
Cappagh Community Crèche, Cappagh Castle, Ballingarrane, Askeaton, Co. Limerick.	Kate Horne Maureen Dillon	069 63758
Hospital Community Playschool, Main Street, Hospital, Co. Limerick.	Mary Doherty- Ryan Annie Davern	061 383355
Kilmallock Community Childcare Service, Old Library, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.	Rebecca Cullinane	087 9506440
Broadford Community Childcare, Broadford, Co. Limerick.	Margaret	063 84876
Desmond Community Crèche, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.	Margaret Kelly	069 79774

³ This is not the complete listing of Limerick County Community Crèches - see [here](#) for a complete listing compiled by the Limerick Childcare Committee.

THURLES, CO. TIPPERARY. COMMUNITY CRÈCHES⁴	CONTACT	TEL. NUMBER
Bright Star Pre-School National School Gaile, Holycross, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Sheila Kennedy	0504 41877
Bright Sparks Childcare Services Lr Ballingarry, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Sally Ivers	052 9154896 EXT 2
Drangan/Cloneen Community Playgroup Community Centre, Drangan, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Maggie O'Halloran	052 9152333
Gort na nÓg Gort na nÓg Childcare Centre, Holycross Village, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Bríd Bergin Maher	0504 43683 087 8360214
MFRC Childcare Services Glengoole, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Fiona McMonagle	052 9157992
Slieveardagh Community Childcare The Commons, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Alice Teehan	052 9154900

⁴ This is not the complete listing of Community Crèches in Thurles see [here](#) for a complete listing compiled by the Tipperary Childcare Committee.

THURLES, CO. TIPPERARY. COMMUNITY CRÈCHES (Cond.)⁵	CONTACT	TEL. NUMBER
Thurles Community Social Services Pre-school, Rossa Street, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Christine Douglas	0504 22169
Thurles Targeted Early Intervention Services (Barnardos) , The Mall House, Slievenamon Road, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.	Anne Devereaux	0504 20018
Upperchurch Childcare Centre Gortatooda, Upperchurch, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	Marie McLoughlin	0504 54965

⁵ This is not the complete listing of Community Crèches in Thurles see [here](#) for a complete listing compiled by the Tipperary Childcare Committee.

MONEY MATTERS

Finance may be a real worry for you as an expectant student or student parent. It can be difficult to identify exactly what you are entitled to as many of the payments are administered by separate agencies.

Differences in eligibility can arise depending on your age, your living arrangements and your family and/or personal income. The Coordinator of the Student Parent Support Service will help you to navigate this, by identifying and signposting the supports available.

Any of the following agencies/services can help you ensure you are in receipt of all the allowances and benefits to which you are entitled:

Your local Community Welfare Officer (CWO) ⁶

Your local [Department of Social Protection Office](#)

[Treoir](#) (National one parent family agency)

[Citizens Information Helpline](#)

[Limerick Childcare Committee](#)

⁶Community Welfare Officers operate from [local Health Centres](#) and DSP offices. They administer the [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#) scheme. For your local CWO and clinic times, contact the HSE Central Welfare Office, Mulgrave Street, Limerick ☎061 461 437. This information may also be accessed [here](#).

It is vital to ensure you are receiving your full entitlements, particularly if your goal is to continue with college and complete your degree as a student parent.

MIC

As an expectant student/parent there are specific financial supports you may be able to access within MIC.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

Supports ongoing costs associated with attending college e.g. childcare, commuting, living expenses

MISU STUDENT PARENT WELFARE FUND

Emergency financial support in the case of unforeseen costs or a crisis

MIC UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

These entrance scholarships are available to all students and are awarded by competition based on results obtained in the Leaving Certificate Examination

U-VERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ADULT LEARNERS

U-versity scholarships are for mature students and provide full financial support, if required, for the entire period of study

1916 BURSURY

The 1916 Bursary Fund was announced by the Minister for Education and Skills on 30 December, 2017. The purpose of this funding is to encourage participation and success by students from sections of society that are significantly under-represented in higher education.

Student Assistance Fund (SAF)

The objective of this fund is to support students whose participation in higher education would otherwise be at risk as a direct result of financial difficulties.

The Fund is best described as a contributory payment to supplement a student's main source of income and helps meet some of the extra costs associated with being at college.

Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis. See MIC/Student Assistance Fund for further information.

Students with childcare costs are encouraged to apply to this fund for assistance. Supporting documentation such as a childcare receipt or letter from a childminder is required.

MISU Student Parent Welfare Fund

This discretionary fund is provided and administered by MISU. It is an emergency fund for expectant students towards 'initial costs' in their pregnancy and to support those who require emergency funding (e.g. issues relating to accommodation, unforeseen expenses relating to pregnancy, childcare etc.).

If you wish to make an application to this fund, please text 'Appointment' to 087 9501160 or email nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie. Nicola will give you further information and help to explore your eligibility and assist you in completing the application form if required.

MIC Undergraduate Entrance Scholarships

Undergraduate Entrance Scholarships are awarded by competition on the basis of Leaving Certificate results through the CAO. Successful applicants must commence their degree programme in the academic year following the Leaving Certificate on which the award is based. Mature students are eligible only if they apply for entry via the CAO on the basis of their Leaving Certificate results.

[The Scholarships are allocated across the various MIC programmes](#) of study and are valued at €2,000 for the first year only of the undergraduate programme.

U-versity Higher Education Scholarships for Adult Learners

These scholarships provide financial support to those who wish to pursue a Bachelor's Degree **for the first time** in participating third level institutions in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland.

Scholarships can be in any subject area and will be tailored to individual circumstances to cover some or all of the direct and indirect financial costs associated with higher education.

To be eligible to apply certain criteria must be met. For example, applicants must be aged 23 years or over on the 1st January of year of enrollment and must be returning to higher education in the 2018/19 or 2019/20 academic year after a break from education of 3 years or more, or, have completed a higher education progression / preparation course in the last 2 years.

Eligible applicants must also demonstrate:

- Socio-economic disadvantage and in financial need (e.g. in receipt of social benefit);
- A clear and stated motivation for returning to education and an ambition for their educational journey;
- A drive to succeed and strong work ethic;
- An ability to be transformed and transform others as a result of this scholarship and educational experience.

Applications must be submitted via [U-versity](#)'s online system. See [here](#) for further information.

1916 Bursary – Programme for Access to Higher Education

This funding, which commenced in 2017-2018, supports bursaries by higher education institutions to students.

Each year 35 are currently annually allocated to the mid-west region of which seven are awarded to lone parents.

It is planned that these bursaries (i.e. €5,000 for each year of the undergraduate programme) will be awarded until 2019-2020.

Further information

Other schemes are also available which specifically target students with limited means, students with disabilities and students from minority ethnic groups.

See [Studentfinance.ie](https://www.studentfinance.ie) for details of such schemes currently in operation and the [Department of Education and Skills](#) for further available scholarships.

Department of Social Protection

There is also a range of payments which may be appropriate to your needs from the **Department of Social Protection**.



Back to Education Allowance

If you are unemployed, parenting alone or have a disability and are getting certain payments from the DSP, you may be eligible to apply for a Back to Education Allowance. A payment of €500 is available to students with dependent children who are parenting alone and in receipt of BTEA.

Maternity Leave

Mothers are entitled to 26 weeks' maternity leave together with 16 weeks additional unpaid leave which begins immediately at the end of maternity leave.

Maternity Benefit

This is a payment made to women who are on maternity leave and covered by PRSI. You should apply at least 6 weeks before you intend to go on maternity leave (12 weeks if self-employed). If you are already on certain social welfare payments you may get half-rate Maternity Benefit. Fill in the Maternity Benefit Application Form (pdf) and send it to the Maternity Benefit Section of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Paternity Leave

With effect from 1 September 2016, new parents (other than the mother of the child) are entitled to this leave from employment/self-employment following the birth or the adoption of a child.

Paternity Benefit

This payment is for employed/self-employed people when covered by PRSI and on paternity leave from work; it is paid for two weeks. You should apply 4 weeks before you intend to go on paternity leave (12 weeks if self-employed). If you are already on certain social welfare payments, then you may get half-rate Paternity Benefit. Fill in the Paternity Benefit Application Form (PDF) and send it to the Paternity Benefit Section of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

One Parent Family Payment

This is a payment for men and women who are bringing children up without the support of a partner.

Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement)

This is a weekly tax-free payment available to employees with children giving extra financial support to those on low pay.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is a universal payment that is payable to the parent (most often the mother) or guardian of children.

Rent Supplement

Rent Supplement is a means-tested payment for certain people living in private rented accommodation who cannot provide for the cost of their accommodation from their own resources.

Exceptional Needs Payment

An Exceptional Needs Payment is a single payment to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional expenditure, which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income.

Back-to Education Allowance -v - One-Parent Family Payment

If you are already on One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP) you will need to calculate whether it is worth more financially for you to apply for Back-to-Education Allowance (BTEA) when in college or to remain on your current payment. You should factor your child/ren's age into this decision when planning for income support.

If you are nearing the end of your OPFP⁷, BTEA may be of greater benefit to you because it is paid for the duration of your course. However, it is possible to be admitted to BTEA 'mid-course' but remember BTEA and the maintenance component of the Student Grant scheme are not paid simultaneously.

A separate arrangement is now in place where you can move to the Jobseeker's Transitional payment (JST) and continue in full-time education. You may be eligible to claim JST and the maintenance component of the Student Grant together but you will no longer qualify for Rent Supplement.

⁷ When your youngest child reaches the age of seven years, and if your circumstances do not change, you become eligible for [Jobseeker's Transitional payment \(JST\)](#).

It is important to remember that your entitlement to JST will end when your youngest child reaches the age of 14. If you have not finished your course when your youngest child reaches 14 you will have to either transfer to BTEA to complete your course or opt to remain in receipt of the maintenance component of the student grant.

You may be eligible for BTEA if you are signing on for PRSI credits only and meet the qualifying period but this means you take part on a non-payment basis. However, in this instance you can apply for both the fee and maintenance components of the student grant or a postgraduate fee contribution (if relevant)⁸.

⁸ BTEA is available for Higher Diploma (H. Dip.) qualification in any discipline or a Professional Masters in Education; other postgraduate courses are not recognised for BTEA (with the exception of a Master degree based **solely** on life experience where the applicant holds no other third-level qualification).

IF YOU TRANSFER TO BTEA YOU SHOULD ...	IF YOU CONTINUE TO GET OPFP YOU SHOULD ..
Receive BTEA equivalent to your current payment	Keep your existing payment
Not be eligible for the maintenance component of the Student Grant scheme but you still must apply to SUSI for Student Contribution and Tuition Fees or Post Graduate Fee contribution – where appropriate	Be entitled to apply for all components of the Student Grant Scheme (this includes the €3,000 Student Contribution) ⁹
Retain your medical card while in receipt of BTEA	Retain your medical card for three years – eligibility will be re-assessed after this time
In general, retain Rent Supplement	Lose Rent Supplement by reason of being in full-time education
<p>If you started college before 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time work during the academic year does not affect your BTEA payment <p>If you started college after 2016 (or returned after a break)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time work will be assessed under the rules that applied to the payment from which you <u>qualified for BTEA</u> (including means assessment) 	<p>If you do part-time work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first €150 of gross weekly earnings are disregarded 50% of weekly earnings between €130* and €425 per week are assessed as means and will reduce your OPFP

⁹ It is important to note that not all applicants on social welfare payment automatically qualify for the Student Grant Scheme.

<i>IF YOU TRANSFER TO BTEA YOU SHOULD ...</i>	<i>IF YOU CONTINUE TO GET OPFP YOU SHOULD ...</i>
BTEA is guaranteed for the duration of your course	Changes in family circumstances while you are in full-time education might affect your eligibility for OPFP (if your child no longer lives with you or your youngest reaches the age of 7)
Get an annual Cost of Education Allowance of €500 if you are getting BTEA and you have a dependent child	

Notes:

Student Grant Scheme (SUSI)

The [SUSI](#) website is a comprehensive source of information with regard to your eligibility for the Student Grant Scheme.



For many students the SUSI grant is their main source of financial help with the various costs of participating in third level. Family and/or personal income is the key factor assessed but there are also other conditions.

Keep a record of all your communication with SUSI!

Communication by e-mail is best but photocopy all documentation put in the post, stay on top of timelines and document requests. If in doubt, check it out! Consult with others (e.g. your local Citizens Information Service) or contact SUSI directly.

- Phone 0761 087 874 - Mon to Fri
 9am-5:30pm¹⁰
- E-mail support@susi.ie
- Facebook [Susi Support](#)
- Twitter [Susi Helpdesk](#)

It is very important to inform the **MIC Fees Office**¹¹ if there are problems with your grant or if you are engaged in the SUSI Review/Appeals process. MIC are not informed by SUSI (and are therefore unaware) of any issues regarding your grant application. If you have not contacted the Fees Office and/or entered into an arrangement such as a payment plan you may not be able to access your exam results.

Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure the Fees Office is aware of your situation.

¹⁰ Call costs to 0761 numbers vary and your telephone service provider should be able to give you further details on the costs that apply for your telephone package – you can request a callback to save credit if you wish.

¹¹ [Nicola.Synan](#) ☎061 204312 or [Sharon.Barry](#) ☎061 204537.

Housing Support

There is housing support available to those who have a long-term housing need by way of the [Housing Assistance Payment](#).



One of the conditions of this payment is that you must qualify for [local authority housing support](#) and source your own accommodation.

Every individual and family situation is different. It is important to think things through and talk with your family, or those close to you, before you make any decisions to change your current accommodation arrangements.

Childcare

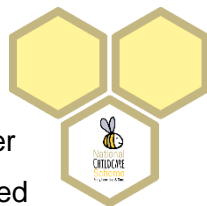
From October 2019 the [National Childcare Scheme](#) will replace all existing childcare schemes with the aim of supporting the cost of childcare for families on lower incomes and parents returning to work or education.



To [access the scheme](#) a verified [mygovind.ie](#) account is required along with your child's date of birth and Personal Public Service Number (PPSN).

There are two subsidies available:

- 1) A Universal subsidy (.50c per hour) for all families with children aged under 3 years (including those not yet qualified for the free preschool programme) towards the cost of a registered childcare place;
- 2) An Income Assessed subsidy for families with children aged between 23 weeks and 15 years. The rate will vary depending on **your level of family income, your child's age and their educational stage.**



See [here](#) for further information about the new scheme

Community Crèches specifically facilitate parents availing of further education or entering employment.

Crèche's closest to MIC Limerick are [Social Services, Henry Street](#) and [Our Lady of Lourdes](#), Childers Road, Limerick.

The crèche most convenient to the MIC St. Patrick's campus in Thurles is [ABC Crèche and Pre-School](#), Friar Street, Townparks, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

These crèches offer full day care for children between the ages of 6 months and 3 years and pre-school sessional facilities (i.e. mornings only).

The Student Parent Support Service offers assistance in exploring childcare options to suit your particular needs. It is important to remember that the [Student Assistance Fund](#) can help with childcare costs.

If your circumstances change or if you have unforeseen difficulties with childcare, you may also be eligible for the Student Parent Welfare Fund which can offer financial support in the short-term.

Remember that it is really important that you are happy with the type of childcare you choose and it is never too early to consider your childcare options.

Childcare will be a key factor in determining when you return to, continue with, or commence college. Having a childcare plan in place will ensure you are able to focus on your own return to college.

[Healthcare](#)

Children under the age of 6 are entitled to a GP visit card. This card covers free GP visits, home visits and out of hours, urgent GP care.



If your child already has a [medical card](#), registration for the scheme is not required providing eligibility is maintained. However, if family circumstances change and your family is no longer eligible for medical cards, children under 6 must be registered for the [GP visit card \(under 6's\)](#). You can now make your medical card application online. This process allows you to scan and upload documents and other information, and no longer requires a visit to a GP to stamp paper forms.

Revenue

The Single Person Child Carer Credit ([SPCCC](#)) is a tax credit of €1,650 given to employed people who are caring for children on their own; usually the person with whom the qualifying child lives for the whole or greater part of the year (i.e. the primary claimant). This can reduce the tax you pay by €31.73 per week.

A person in receipt of this tax credit is also entitled to a €4,000 extension in the standard rate band at the 20% tax rate.

Tax credits are also available for widowed parents, and those who are separated or divorced.



SUPPORTING PREGNANCY/PARENTING IN MIC

The Importance of Self-Care

In order to support your dual responsibilities as a student and a parent and to manage the changes and challenges, prioritising your own self-care is crucial.

Sometimes when we are in a caring role, we are very good at looking after our children but put ourselves last.

How many student parents have spent an evening preparing lunches but forgot to make one for themselves...



Find ways of building self-care and time for yourself into every day while in MIC.

Paying attention to your self-care means focusing on the basics such as eating well, scheduling time for exercise, having good sleep habits and limiting caffeine and alcohol.

This will help you to pace yourself and to stay on top of things. Knowing when to take a break is important too!

Opportunities for self-care at MIC (schedule for 2018/2019; may be subject to change)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
MEDICAL CENTRE Morning drop-in time. <u>Venue:</u> 3 rd Floor, Tara Building. 10am-12pm COUNSELLING DROP-IN HOUR <u>Venue:</u> T311/T312 11am-12pm	MEDICAL CENTRE Morning drop-in time. <u>Venue:</u> 3 rd Floor, Tara Building. 10am-12pm COUNSELLING DROP-IN HOUR <u>Venue:</u> T311/T312 11am-12pm MINDFULNESS <u>Venue:</u> Meditation Room - Lunchtime	MEDICAL CENTRE Morning drop-in time. <u>Venue:</u> 3 rd Floor, Tara Building. 10am-12pm COUNSELLING DROP-IN HOUR <u>Venue:</u> T311/T312 11am-12pm STUDENT PARENT GROUP/PEER SUPPORT SPACE <u>Venue:</u> Chaplaincy Hospitality Room, T207 11am-12:30pm BILINGUAL MINDFULNESS <u>Venue:</u> <i>An Seomra Caidrimh</i> - Lunchtime	MEDICAL CENTRE Morning drop-in time. <u>Venue:</u> 3 rd Floor, Tara Building. 10am-12pm COUNSELLING DROP-IN HOUR <u>Venue:</u> T311/T312 11am-12pm	MEDICAL CENTRE Morning drop-in time. <u>Venue:</u> 3 rd Floor, Tara Building. 10am-12pm COUNSELLING DROP-IN HOUR <u>Venue:</u> T311/T312 11am-12pm

[Health Promotion](#) (G06 Foundation Building ☎061 204 922) for detail about ongoing events (e.g. Yoga, Meditation, Pilates etc.).

[Chaplaincy Hospitality Room](#) (T208 Tara Building ☎061 204 339) for Chaplaincy diary of events. Daily Drop in Service with tea and coffee facilities

[Academic Learning Centre](#) (C1-C4 ☎061 204 373) for one-to-one academic support, tutoring, pre-exam planning and study skills handbook.

- *'Most helpful in the SPSS was the community spirit. Everyone has shared experiences in common.'*
- *'Advice from other students. Meeting other parents, knowing the support is available and having someplace to meet.'*
- *'Meeting people in the same situation as me provided support.'*
- *'There was great encouragement having met other mature students who are in the same boat. Support on tap when required.'*
- *'I felt I had common concerns with other parents and they helped you stay on track.'*

BA & B.Ed. Expectant and Student Parents

Keep in touch and update through Social Media



The SPSS Facebook page is the main communication tool of the service. Student parents and expectant parents are strongly encouraged to like and follow the Facebook page in order to keep up to date with the service and the supports provided. The page regularly posts updates, notices from other support services and agencies as well articles of interest to parents and expectant parents locally and nationally.

Try to make the most of MIC facilities and keep active

Walking a few laps of the track at lunchtime can do a lot to relieve stress or even to reflect on the essay you are writing. For many student parents, it is not possible to carve out time in the evenings for exercise or self-care. There is a wide range of options on campus at MIC which may be more feasible. Even one hour a week can make a difference!

Coping with Exams

Paying attention to the basics of self-care will help you to cope with the stress and anxiety you may feel around exam time you may feel around exam time.

Remember it is okay to ask for extra help.

Don't forget -

- **Take breaks** - During study time a 10-minute walk will leave you less stressed, calm and more focused;
- **Limit the caffeine** - (especially energy drinks or caffeine tablets). It can cause heart palpitations and panic attacks;

- **Think positive** - Spend time with people who have a positive effect. It will rub off on you. Avoid negative thoughts, such as 'everyone else seems better organised, while I'm struggling';
- **Be realistic** - Take studying seriously and try to do your best, but don't set yourself crazy goals. If you set the standards very high, you're putting yourself under massive stress;
- **Try not to leave study to the last minute** - If it is too late for that and you are cramming, then listen to your body and catnap with your child if you need to. Otherwise you risk burnout.

Contact the Academic Learning Centre sooner rather than later as it can be more difficult to get an appointment at peak times of the semester. Published by the ALC, the Study Skills Handbook is an excellent resource and support. Try to be pro-active and engage with the supports available on campus rather than 'letting it all build up'. Unfortunately, family life does not stop during exams or when assignments are due so aiming to be a step ahead can help.

Enhance your learning AND achieve your potential!

The Academic Learning Centre (ALC) provides academic support for students in MIC and aims to help students improve their academic performance.

*The ALC provides confidential support in:
essay writing, time management, tackling reading lists,
giving presentations, studying, revising and doing exams.*

*The ACL office is located in C1-C4, between the
Foundation Building and the Tara Building, and is open
for drop-ins Monday - Thursday
10am– 12pm and 2pm–4pm*

*Make an appointment with the ALC if you need support
with study skills or academic writing,
the sooner the better.*

Tel: 061 204373

The experience and learning of the Student Parent Support Service in meeting with expectant and student parents has identified key factors for success.

Firstly, it helps to be a step ahead and prepare for the unexpected. Working ahead on assignments, where possible, allows scope for the many challenges and changes of parenting and family life.

Secondly, treat the college day like a work-day and try to use the spaces between lectures so that you are not under as much pressure in the evenings.

Finally, engaging with MIC support services and being open to new experiences and meeting other students will help you to stay connected. This will go a long way towards ensuring your success and your enjoyment of college.

- *'Juggling study with family commitments can be challenging but the reality is that you will only be studying for so long and then once you are finished your study, you'll be able to spend time with your children.'*
- *'It's surprising because when you know you only have two hours free, you get the amount of work done that used to take you five when you had no baby.'*

Post Grad. Student Parent

*Student Parent Support Service
Located within the Medical Centre
(3rd Floor Tara Building)*

*If you would like to make an appointment, please text
'appointment' with your name to 0879501160
or email: nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie*

*If you have a general query, you might like to check out the
service's Facebook page for further information or call in to
the Student Parent Group where you will meet Nicola and
other student parents/expectant parents at MIC!*

**In conclusion, seek help when you need it, try to be
proactive and empower yourself.**

**If you need support in developing these skills, the
Student Parent Support Service will guide and assist
you.**

All you have to do is ask!

SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Charlotte – Final Year B. Education

Recipient of MIC Award of Excellence

'My initial thoughts of coming to college were overwhelming. I had never gone to third level college and I wondered if I was academically capable of succeeding. I worried about the financial aspect of leaving a reliable, well paid job as a S.N.A and questioned could my son and I survive. Could I find an affordable, reliable and kind babysitter? I was unsure of the level of time-commitment required in a full-time degree and if it was fair to be gone on my son. At the time I was a lead singer of a band and was involved in many musical projects and wondered could I sustain this life.

Despite my initial concerns I am pleased to say I have successfully completed a five years course, year one being an access course to gain entry to the B.Ed. and four further years doing the B.Ed. It has been a challenging but a rewarding journey in Mary Immaculate College.

The predominant challenge was all about finding the balance between home life and college. Although you may have a lecture, an exam or assignment your child(ren) need to be brought to school and cared for until you return. Finding a reliable, trust worthy childminder that will provide food and help with homework is key to eliminating that worry and alleviating pressure. I chose a childminder because the crèches opening hours are not long enough while you are in college. Time management was an area where I progressed throughout college. I tried to get as much done in college therefore, when I returned home I was available to be there for my son.

Here is some advice for any parent considering a return to education

- *Keep up to date with readings and begin assignments when possible this will spread your workload out;*
- *Be active, attend and engage with lectures when possible this will enhance learning;*

- *Make friends in college however, be honest to yourself throughout your journey, you may lose friends, but you will make important friends for life.*

The financial aspect of attending college full-time presented difficulties and sacrifices. Nevertheless, I believe it is truly worth it and I will have a decent income for life.

I worked every summer and saved which helped, SUSI, student parent and SAF provided me with assistance when required. The student parent support service was instrumental in my continuation of college. At times when life was tough I could speak to Nicola and she would happily listen, advise and help. This kept me motivated and affirmed I could do this. As a student parent managing a household can be tight, often other unexpected costs can burden you for example car problems. I spoke to Nicola and she was able to put me on the right path to seek funding. Nicola was able email lecturers on my behalf if I had any concerns regarding college. She listened to my problems and advised me on how to resolve them. She is extremely professional, non-judgemental and seeks the best for the students providing them with one to one private support and checking in on them regularly.

Music was my outlet that I could get away from college and often I could bring my son along.

I enjoyed thoroughly the space the Student Parent Support Service provided every Wednesday in the student lounge and chaplaincy. It gave parents an opportunity of catching up together, with a cup of coffee and treats. I felt I could relate to these parents as they understood and experienced similar pressures. Guest speakers were often organised to inform us of different supports or information that may be beneficial to parents. The Christmas party was fantastically organised annually where I brought in my son to see Santa and see where I attend college. The entertainment provided for children and parent was top-class every year. I have met fabulous people over the past four years; it definitely was a highlight for me.

Although it was difficult, I really enjoyed the experience of school placement. I am extremely proud of all my placement grades

which reflected I was on the right path at becoming a primary school teacher. I was inspired by lecturers who taught their courses with passion, therefore I tried to adopt enthusiasm and similar traits in my classroom. I appreciated learning about development education geo-literacy and sustainability in my education electives and find them invaluable in my personal life and in the classroom. My recent award of excellence in music from Mary Immaculate College was the icing in the cake. It was the first time I have ever achieved something prestigious. My family, Nicola Hurley, and Lecturer Dr Anne Dolan came the night of the award ceremony; it was a moment of pride for us all. My son was so proud of me and I think as a parent that's a phenomenal feeling. We want our children to be proud of us, to inspire them to do great things and present them with opportunities to succeed. I would encourage any parent to consider college. It has been such an incredible journey and has made such a difference to my own confidence and self-belief. After 5 years at MIC, I am so glad I did it and found a way and I soon will be working in a rewarding profession that I once thought was beyond my capability.'

Triona - BA Liberal Arts & Postgraduate Student

'Overall my experience as a student parent was fantastic and I wouldn't change a thing. It is usually after the event that we appreciate so much of what feels like going through the motions at the time. There were great times and there were some very challenging times. It is my experience that both the challenges themselves and overcoming them are what taught me the most valuable lessons (e.g. I can overcome anything as long as I don't try to overcome them alone). The services offered in MIC are second to none and the supports offered, particularly through the Student Parent Support Service, were extremely beneficial to me. I experienced a sense of belonging to something more than an educational institution. I was an individual celebrated within a group of people, people who like me were on the same journey.'

The challenges:

As a single parent starting on my educational journey, I was both excited and daunted. Childcare was a priority for me but more than that, the happiness of my children while they were being cared for by others when I was in college was crucial. One of the challenges faced was that I could not be fully present for my children at all times particularly when my workload was heavy and the stress of exams was looming.

How I overcame these challenges:

I was very lucky to have the support of family members who did all they could to support both my children and I in my education. I also decided to look at the bigger picture and to reinforce this in conversations with my children. Yes four years is a long time however, the end result would be worth the effort and time sacrificed because our lives would be enhanced by the job I was going to get at the end of all of the hard work. Although four years seems like forever especially in the eyes of a child, the time actually flies by and routine and structure become part of the everyday experience.

Being as organised as possible is crucial and being a person who is organised in chaos is also okay. I know because this is me. I often wrote notes on envelopes or whatever piece of paper was nearest to me at the time and the kitchen table often could not be seen for all the paper it hoarded but that too was okay. The sky didn't fall down because everything wasn't neat and tidy. How we organise ourselves is completely individual.

I would advise students not to worry too much about how they organise themselves but more importantly never to compare themselves to others. It is possibly the biggest mistake to make. Remembering that we are individuals who have various ideas of organisational skills and working within our own capabilities is much more important than trying to be as organised as the next person.

Be yourself, it is the only way to be.

Enjoy your time in Mary Immaculate College. As a single parent I didn't socialise much throughout my college years but that is not something I regret or wish had been different. I was happy to socialise within the college and I don't feel that I missed out on anything. You don't have to go out once or twice a week outside of the college walls to enjoy your time. Something as simple as having a cup of tea with a friend or two between lectures can lift your spirits more than any night out plus you won't suffer the after effects of a night out which I'm sure is torture when you need to be up for a 9am lecture☺.

Engaging with the services is something I would advise students to do sooner rather than later. The Student Parent Support Service offers advice and guidance on all matters relating to being a parent in college. This service takes a load off, not just when you first engage but as many times as you need it to. It is easy to access and makes a vast difference in the lives of student parents. Supports include emotional, practical and financial. Student parents get together once a week in a relaxed, friendly environment to chat and relax. Staff members are approachable, friendly and will go out of their way to ensure that they give the best support possible to all student parents.

I would also say that lecturers are extremely helpful so don't be afraid to ask a question or contact them through e-mail. In my experience, they are readily available to answer any questions you may have.

Top tips

- *Be yourself;*
- *When you feel like you can't do it, say it out loud. This is when you will find that actually you can do it;*
- *Take your journey one step at a time. Put one foot in front of the other every day and before you know it you will have reached your destination;*
- *Find time for laughter, it really is the best medicine;*
- *Time flies and it will be over before you know it;*

- *Take your time after you complete your degree just to take it all in. Give yourself time to adjust.*

Everything will work out in the end. Looking back I can say that I had a very positive experience of college life. Although I lost somebody very close to me in the final year of my degree which was devastating, the support that I received was fantastic and very much appreciated. Without this support it would have been much harder to carry on and not only to finish my degree but also to complete a postgraduate programme. If you need help and support don't be afraid to ask. There is nothing to fear and everything available to keep you going through the hardest of times.'

Rachel - BA Early Childhood Care & Education

'When finding out I became unexpectedly pregnant, the first thing I was worried about was finishing my final upcoming year of college. At the time I was on off-campus placement at home, so I wasn't near college. I emailed Nicola in the Student Parent Support Service and from speaking with her via email and phone, I was much more comfortable, prepared and calm about the pregnancy experience and how it would affect college.'

I can't describe how helpful and kind Nicola was, she was always on hand, answered any question I had, and provided ongoing, reassuring support not only regarding college, but also with my placement, personal issues and financial support.

Without the help of the Student Parent Support Service, I think my pregnancy experience would have been much more difficult. Facing into my final year, I feel much more relaxed and prepared and I know I am going to have consistent support from Nicola and staff to help me achieve my goals.'

Sarah - B. Education

'My experience of being a student parent has been tough both mentally and physically. However, I've sure reaped the rewards after a college semester that has been longer than usual, the relief and happiness I now feel is sure worth it. In the beginning I thought I wouldn't be able to cope with the journey Monday to Friday,

leaving my daughter every day for such a long time and the most challenging obstacle of all was the guilt, it was the most crippling. But the thought of all of this is worse than it actually is; as Nicola said to me, and it has stuck with me ever since, 'Mom guilt will never disappear', this natural motherly feeling. Becoming a teacher has always been my dream job and I had to remain focused and keep reminding myself that it wasn't just me I was doing this for it was now for myself and my daughter.

My tops tips on how to get through college as a student parent include:

Accept all the help that is offered to you - this was my worst downfall, some days you will be exhausted perhaps you were up in the middle of the night with your baby or had a particularly hard day, this is when you need to accept that you need a rest tonight. Let someone else put your baby to bed and you take that early night, you will feel better for it the next day when you can put all of your time and energy into your baby.

The lead up to exams and throughout placement will be a very challenging time as you will have no option but to spend less time with your baby as you will need the time to catch up on notes and do everything else that comes with college. This guilt will really play on your mind if you let it. I would advise if you don't have the full support of your family, inquire about **getting a baby sitter** to help you with the days you need that extra bit of help. If the guilt is getting too much when you are leaving your baby with family offer them a payment or perhaps something you can do for them in return. Remember this period is only short term and it won't last forever.

After a tough day, you might need a **catch up with yourself** - here I would advise you to take that 15 minute walk after college or go for that swim you've wanted so badly for the last few weeks. Your body has been through a lot both during pregnancy and after and you need to allow yourself to recuperate too. It will do you, your family and your baby the best in the long run.

Talk to your lectures about your situation - if they don't know they won't know why you had to take that day off college or why

you turned up a few minutes late for class. In my experience they have been very understanding.

Planning is everything - *make sure everyone who is looking after your baby knows the days s/he will be babysitting in advance, this just makes everyone feel more at ease as they can plan what they will do on their days off and the days they have your baby. Remember this is only temporary.*

Don't doubt yourself - *always go with your gut instinct and do what is right for you and your baby. Don't let anyone tell you what is the right or wrong thing to do, even if it is family who is telling you what to do and you don't agree. Your family might be the best in the world but they can sometimes feel like your worst enemy. When this happens, you need to take a step back, articulate what you may say to them in the nicest way possible and discuss with them what might be irritating you, this is the only way you will be able to deal with issues that may arise.*

If you have good friends in college, do not refrain from expressing your worries with them. For me they were a blessing; to be able to talk to them in college every day even if just to get little things off my chest because I could trust them and I knew they would only encourage and support me. Also, do not hesitate to talk to Nicola about issues that are cropping up as college is progressing, she will offer you the best of advice as she has seen it all. It may seem like only a little issue but if it is really bothering you Nicola will always have a solution. Sometimes the financial situation can be difficult so ensure you know what you are entitled to. Nicola will help you with this.

Take every day as it comes. Do not fret about next week or next month. Every day is going to be different to the next. You may be exhausted and wonder if it is worth it but take it from me it most certainly is. Remember your time in college will not last forever, so you need to enjoy it, you might feel like you can't go on that night out with the girls or the boys but you do definitely need that night to unwind with friends too. Becoming a parent is the most rewarding and joyous experience that I've had in my life, despite not having planned a baby so early. Enjoy being a parent, you have been given this role of parent for a reason and you are strong

enough to cope with it. The good days will always outweigh the seldom bad days.'

Moira – BA Liberal Arts

'As I approached the third year of my Liberal Arts programme studying English and Psychology at MIC, I happened to discover that I was pregnant. Despite the unplanned nature of my pregnancy, it did not enter my mind that I would not return to my studies as normal. Fortunately, the autumn semester of my third year was to be spent on placement which I was lucky enough to have secured on campus however, at this point I was unaware of who I should turn to regarding my situation and it wasn't until almost a month later that I was introduced to the Student Parent Support Service through the Student Union and Chaplaincy.

I attended the next Student Parent Drop-in session where I met Nicola Hurley and other student parents. From here on, my experience of being both an expectant parent and a full-time student at Mary Immaculate College was wholly positive. Any of the initial apprehension and worries that I had since returning were lifted and replaced by an overwhelming sense of support that proved unwavering throughout the months that followed and remains to be to this day. The support I received was undoubtedly inherent to my goal of continuing with my education and graduating alongside my friends despite the momentous change that was about to take place in my everyday life.

While I was determined to keep my studies on track, this was easier said than done as the spring semester arrived and I entered the later stages of my pregnancy. I had been so focused on returning to MIC initially that I had not begun to consider how I would manage a semester of modules, a three-hour daily commute, and preparing for a baby! This transition itself I found to be the most difficult to cope with as I felt I needed to have everything in place and done on time.

During these months, I had almost weekly one-to-one appointments with Nicola and attended the drop-in sessions, which allowed me to unwind and take a much-needed breather in the middle of very busy weeks. The SPSS maintained

communication between lecturers/tutors and myself regarding any issues that arose during the semester, which was a welcome relief and allowed me to focus on assignments without too many other worries. I continued to attend lectures up until a week before our son was due and was hospitalised a couple of days later with various complications. During this time, Nicola remained a point of contact that I will forever be grateful for.

Matthew arrived on 13th March 2016 with us both remaining in hospital for a week after his birth due to being unwell. By the end of April I, had one module completed and two exams left to sit. I studied as often as I could and was determined to sit the exam scheduled for May however, as the time approached, I became increasingly aware that I was not ready, and the emotional toll of the previous weeks began to take hold. Once again, Nicola was there and helped me to apply for an I-Grade, very much at the last minute, allowing me to take the time that I needed. As determined as I had been all along, it is also important to recognise when it is time to take things slow and to re-evaluate the situation. The most valuable message that Nicola put across each time we met was that there is always time – deadlines can be extended, exceptions can be made, everyone is there to help you to the finish line, but nothing is more important than your overall well-being and health.

Summer 2016 came and went, and it was time to return to MIC as a final year student with a six month old in tow! Time management became second nature, I would arrive in college at 8.30am and leave at 5pm, getting as much work and study done between lectures and tutorials as possible. Routine was everything and the weekly SPSS drop-in sessions were much looked forward to! Nicola was once again always on hand to listen to my worries and offer reassurance and guidance when needed. Each deadline was met with a sense of achievement that kept me going. The much-anticipated end was finally in sight as I submitted my Undergraduate Dissertation in Psychology three days before Matthews first birthday. Because of the support provided by the Student Parent Support Service at MIC at no point did I feel as though it was going to be an unsurmountable task, nor did I struggle, as any time I needed clarity or a breather I always had somewhere I could go.

The Student Parent Support Service was there for me every step of the way during the final two years of my degree, my pregnancy, and as I began my journey into parenthood. I was able to enjoy being a mother to my son, which naturally always came first, and felt amongst good company at the drop-in sessions where I picked up many tips and tricks for along the way! While sometimes the days might have been long, and the nights even longer, the feeling of accomplishment was worth it in the end as I fulfilled my goal and graduated in October 2017. I am currently looking forward to returning to Mary Immaculate College in the autumn to begin my Postgraduate studies, the confidence with which to do so I would not have gained without my experiences over the last two years and the vital support offered by Nicola Hurley and the SPSS.'

Laura - BA Liberal Arts

'If someone had asked me back in 2012, where do you see yourself in 6 years? I can assure you my answer would not have been 'I will be 25 with two daughters one 5 years old and one 17 months. I will have an undergraduate BA honours degree and will have a post graduate honours degree in Adult and Further Education'. It is not something I ever believed I could achieve.

I fell pregnant in my second year of my undergraduate degree, I was 19. I knew from the start my situation would result in my college journey differing greatly from that of my peers. With that said, I never once thought about dropping out or giving up on achieving my degree. I had so many worries and I did not know anyone that had been in my situation so I had no one that could advise me or provide me with guidance. I was not aware there were any services available to a student in my situation until one of my lecturers mentioned it to me and I emailed Nicola Hurley, the student parent co-ordinator at Mary Immaculate College. From the moment I sent that email I could never have anticipated how much easier college life would become for me with the assistance of the student parent service.

One of my worries was that I would miss the first crucial months of my daughter's life as I would be pre-occupied with college work. Nicola advised me that I could take a leave of absence from college for the first year of my daughter's life, if I wished. I would

never have known I had this option if I had not been linked with the student parent service. When my daughter was a mere few weeks old we encountered an obstacle I never imagined I would be faced with and it resulted in hospital visits and week-long stays in a hospital up the country. With college work, a sick baby and the financial costs of it all I did not know how I was going to manage it all. I voiced my worries to Nicola and she helped in every possible way providing me with moral support and financial assistance through the student parent service. Travel expenses and other costs associated with these trips were something the student parent service could help me with as well as notifying lecturers for the reason of my absence. These trips were not far, few and in between, they were twice a month and over time became once a month until recently and whenever I needed assistance the student parent service always came through for me. In the midst of an extremely difficult time, the Student Parent Support Service made my life a little easier.

In 2017 I began my post-graduate course in Mary Immaculate College after my experience the first time I swore I would never return to college but my children had become the driving force behind my motivation and I wanted to do better for them. I was not entitled to a grant and I had not lived at home since I was 19 so I knew I was solely responsible for funding my postgraduate degree. The Student Parent Support Service helped me and pointed me in the direction of financial services that were available to me as a student parent, making my college journey a bit easier once again. As well as helping financially with my educational journey the student parent support service also held Easter, Halloween and Christmas parties which allowed my children to be involved in my college journey, which both they and I loved.

The biggest obstacle I faced throughout my time as both an under graduate and post graduate student parent was dealing with the feeling of guilt I encountered every time I left the house to go to college or every time I sat down to complete an assignment. I felt I was putting college before my children and this resulted in an immense feeling of guilt, every single time. The only way I could deal with it was to take college one assignment at a time, just focus on the next one that's due, Complete that one then worry about

the next. It was like a tick list and every time I completed one, I simply crossed it off my list.

The only advice I could give someone in my situation is to be selfish with your time when it comes to college work and if guilt is something you experience while doing this, then find a way to reduce or rid yourself of that guilt. If you feel you are struggling and need help, then ask for it. The student parent support service is there to provide that assistance. Hindsight is a great thing, it has shown me that all the struggles and obstacles that I have been faced with I have overcome thanks to hard work and perseverance and the help of the student parent support service. The Support, help, guidance and assistance that Nicola and the student parent support service has provided me with has proven to be invaluable during my time at Mary Immaculate College and for that I am eternally grateful.'

Tristan - BA Early Childhood Care & Education

'Undertaking a four year level eight degree as a father of two was initially daunting when trying to imagine juggling family life, finances and studying. However, my experience of studying Early Childhood Care and Education, though challenging, was extremely enriching and the supports available through the college were very helpful. The unique Parent Student Support Service provided me with very good practical and emotional support at critical points during my studies such as when my third child was born on exam week at the end of year one. What could have proved an overwhelming process was made much easier through the practical support of this great service, which advised and helped me to efficiently navigate the procedures necessary to deal with such situations. I have very fond memories of studying at Mary Immaculate College and am very happy I made the choice to undertake my degree.'

Caroline - BA Liberal Arts

'I recently graduated from Mary Immaculate College with a degree in English and Geography. I studied the arts programme for four years.

In September 2011 I found out I was pregnant with my daughter. I was only 20 years old and had just begun my first year of college. I was nervous and scared as I thought I would have to drop out of college. I organised a meeting with one of the counsellors in the college and met with her to explain my situation. This is where I felt a bit of relief as I was introduced to Nicola Hurley. Nicola is a Student Parent Co-ordinator who deals with pregnancy crisis.

My daughter was born in February 2012 (my first year of college). I managed to attend college and carry on with my studies just after she was born by sitting an in-class exam when she was just two weeks as well as attending my first year exams and passing them all. I could not have done this without the support of my lecturers, parents but most importantly Nicola. I knew by the end of my first year at MIC that it was possible to attend college while also being a single parent. The support I received from the student parent group and Nicola herself was incredible. We had regular coffee mornings, which gave me a chance to meet other student parents and chat with them.

The Student Parent Support Service also provides practical supports and helped to organise funding towards fuel, which I was grateful for as I commuted quite a distance to college each day. The service also held activities for the children of student parents. I really enjoyed this and my daughter did also. I loved bringing my daughter into college and showing her around and meeting with my friends and the other parents from the group. Without the support from Nicola, I do not think I would be where I am today. Nicola was so kind, helpful and a very supportive person. I cannot thank her enough for all her support these last four years. Even when I had good days and bad days, I always knew there was somewhere I could go even if it was just a chat for five minutes.

My daughter is now six and in senior infants. I took a year out after I graduated and I am now subbing in primary schools around the county. I enjoy every minute of it and it is a great help for my CV. I hope to go back to MIC in September and complete the PME and apply for a fulltime teaching job. I will be delighted to receive the support from Nicola and the group as it will be an intense two years of study. Do not ever think just because you have children or

become pregnant at a young age that you cannot get a degree because you can. If I did not have my daughter, I would not have been motivated to get my degree. I enjoyed every minute of my four years in MIC.'

Gareth – BA Liberal Arts

'The thoughts of returning to College in my final year as a new parent was extremely daunting, I wasn't sure that I would have the time mentally or financially to be able to finish my degree.

However, upon returning to college I immediately contacted the student parent support service. Nicola was so helpful in guiding me and explained all the supports available to me both in the college and also with other external agencies. I thought at first that being a student parent would be tough and a bit isolating as I didn't know any other student parents. The SPSS gave me, and other student parents, both practical and emotional support so that I was able to finish my final year. The Service also gave me an invaluable outlet to speak to other parents and share my concerns; it was relief to know that there were other students also in a similar situation as me.

The service also offers family friendly events throughout the year, which I got to bring my daughter to, these events are a great way to catch up with the other student parents and also give a much-needed break from the study!

I really want to thank Mary I for all the support this year; I finished my degree without the stress of having to worry about being a student parent and with support from Nicola.'

Amina – PME Professional Master of Education

'I was a student of the Professional Master of Education Course, half-way through my first year when I discovered I was pregnant, with the baby expected to arrive the August before second year was to commence. Naturally I was worried about what this meant in terms of my education; could I complete the course? How would I manage it? I had completed my undergraduate degree in Mary Immaculate College too and was aware of the Student Parent Support service from the posters hung around campus, so I

arranged an appointment with Nicola, the Student Parent Support Service Coordinator.

Following my first meeting with Nicola it was like the weight and worry was lifted off my shoulders and I could allow myself to feel excited about the pregnancy and look at the future positively. Nicola talked me through the options of returning to college once I had the baby, or how to apply for a leave of absence from college. She also directed me to the head of my programme, as well as lecturers, to arrange meetings to discuss how I could manage college with a new born baby regarding my attendance, possibly missing the first few weeks of the semester, etc. Thanks to the Student Parent Support Service I was able to finish my first year as an expectant parent with no hassle; the support from Nicola for those few months was truly what kept me motivated to complete the course, but to also bask in the pregnancy and the beginning of my new life with a child knowing that everything with regards to returning to college was under control.

Following the birth of my daughter I decided to take a year leave of absence. During that year Nicola would email quite often to 'check-in' – these emails always made me feel positive about returning to college as I knew there was someone down there who had a genuine interest in me and my situation; it also helped me feel connected to the college in a way.

Returning to college was one of the biggest struggles of my whole situation; however I was lucky enough that I only had to be on-campus for the first semester as the entire second semester was school placement which I was to do in a local school at home. I live two and a half hours from Mary Immaculate College and moving down with my partner and one-year-old daughter wasn't an option. Therefore, I moved down in September, back to student life, after being at home with my partner and daughter for a year. I am fortunate enough that I had an amazing support network – my partner, his family and my own family and that my move and return to college wasn't an issue. But I found being away from my daughter so difficult – I missed her like crazy.

My saving grace during that semester in Limerick was Nicola, the Student Parent Support Service, and the coffee mornings for

student parents that Nicola organised every week. I could organise a meeting with Nicola, and have nothing in particular to ask her I would just want to talk and she would sit and listen. They were invaluable meetings to me, to have someone to hear me out when I was feeling so low.

As well as these meetings, I found the coffee morning beneficial, particularly half-way through the semester. At this stage I was really missing being with my daughter – the weekends weren't enough. Being with fellow student parents allowed me the chance to hear their experiences; what stood out to me were the student parents who were living with their children. At the beginning of the semester I was so envious of them as it wasn't an option for me, however as work piled up for us all I realised that in a way I was lucky. I would work in the library Monday – Thursday so that on the weekends I could spend every minute with my daughter and partner without worrying about college. In turn, I ended up with the best grades of my 6 years in college as I had the biggest motivator – my daughter. This was something that Nicola would always remind me of; that I was doing it for her and in the future when my daughter can understand she will be so proud of me.

Nicola was always practical and truthful in her advice, often had words of encouragement when I was feeling low or defeated, and always had a genuine interest in me and my daughter. I will forever be grateful to Nicola for getting me through college as an expectant student and a student parent.'

SERVICE DIRECTORY

Mary Immaculate College

Tel 061 204 300



MIC is characterised by its informal atmosphere, friendly rapport between students and staff, concern for the individual student and a warm welcome for new students from Ireland and abroad.

Academic Learning Centre

(ALC)	Tel 061 204 733
James Binchy	Tel 061 204 717
Brian Clancy	Tel 061 204 951

Access Office

(Room G01 – Foundation Building)

Maura Moore	Tel 061 204 927
Shirley Burns	Tel 061 204 510

Chaplaincy

(T207 Tara Building)

Fr. Michael Wall	Tel 061 204 331
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(Room G48)

Counselling

(T311 or T312 Tara Building)

Drop-in hour; 11am-12 noon Monday to Friday is available to students, no appointment needed)

Student counsellors

- Nessa Breen Tel 061 204 919
- Brid O'Connell Tel 061 204 948

Director of Student Life

Geraldine Brosnan Tel 061 204 917

Educational Support

▪ Student Academic Services

(Room 112 Foundation Building)

Carrie Ryan Tel 061 204 921

*(Re: Student Status; Leave of Absence Forms;
I Grades, Examinations etc.)*

▪ Education Office

(Room 307 Foundation Building)

Meg Roche O'Shea Tel 061 204 906

▪ Arts Office

(RG1 Res. Block)

Rachel Godfrey Tel 061 204 972

Health & Safety Office

(Room C103, Aras McAuley)

Caroline Duffy Tel 061 204 914

Health Promotion

Eva Devaney Tel 061 204 922

(G06 near the Canteen/Foundation Building)

Medical Centre

10am–12noon Drop in with College Nurses

2pm–4pm (Doctor by Appointment only)

Monday to Friday (3rd Floor Tara Building)

Reception Tel 061 204 343

MISU (Mary Immaculate Student Union)



Ground Floor Tara Building)

Tel 061 400 013 or 061 204 907

MISU represents the MIC student body in negotiations with college staff, management and other organizations on a local, national and international level.

The **MISU website** is a good resource for MIC student supports, welfare and academic advice.

- MISU President Tel 061 774 737
- Vice President Tel 061 774 738 (Education issues)

Student Parent Support Service

SPSS Office in Medical Centre (3rd Floor Tara Building)

If you need an appointment please text '**appointment**' with your name to **087 9501160** or email: **nicola.hurley@mic.ul.ie**

Relevant MIC Publications (2019/2020)

STUDENT INFORMATION GUIDE

UNDERGRADUATE PROSPECTUS

POSTGRADUATE PROSPECTUS

EXTERNAL AGENCIES

(Entries are listed alphabetically)



ADAPT DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES provides emergency accommodation and support for women and children affected by domestic violence.

Tel 1800 200 504/061 412 354

ANAM CARA offers opportunities to support and be supported by parents who have experienced the loss of a child.

Tel 01 404 5378



ANEW provides homelessness and parenting support to women and their families; counselling for post abortion is also available.

Tel 1800 281 281

AWARE provides emotional support and information to individuals and families affected by depression and related disorders. **Tel 01 661 7211**



BARNARDOS (family support) centres provide direct family support services for individual children, families and communities. Limerick Regional Office, Barnardos Centre, Islandgate Project, St Mary's National Girls School, Bishop Street, Limerick. **Tel 061 493 587**



CHILDRENS GRIEF CENTRE offers one-to-one support to children, young people, parents, guardians and their families affected by loss through death, separation or divorce.
Tel 061 224 627

EPIC advocates at national and local level for the rights of young people in care and those with care experience.
Tel 061 514 518



HERE2HELP is one of the *My Options* agencies. They provide counselling and support nationwide in relation to **all** available options in an unplanned or crisis pregnancy situation: Parenting, Adoption and Abortion. The service is free of charge and non-medical only.
Tel 01 216 6300

JIGSAW ensures that no young person feels alone, isolated and disconnected from others around them and provide vital supports to young people with their mental health.
Tel 061 974 510



LIMERICK FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC



This clinic offers advice and full services in relation to family planning and personal health issues and is situated in 27 Mallow Street, Limerick.
Tel 061 312 026

MISCARRIAGE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

This association provides support, help and information for women, couples and their families who have had, or are having a miscarriage and feel the need for help.
Tel 01 873 5702



MY OPTIONS¹² provides all the information and support you may need in an unplanned or crisis pregnancy including continued pregnancy supports and abortion services.
Freephone 1800 828 010

ONE FAMILY advocates for all members of all one-parent families and offers a range of services including non-directive crisis pregnancy counselling.
Lo Call 1890 662 212



¹² When accessing information on an unplanned pregnancy, look for the HSE logo on the website, and choose agencies that are funded by the HSE to provide unplanned pregnancy counselling services. The HSE have advised that there are some fake websites appearing online that are pretending to be the official 'My Options' service.

Parent Support Programme Limerick City



includes a home-visiting service by Community Mothers for parents with new babies/young children; the Teen Parents Programme supports young people who are pregnant and those who are parents.

Tel 061 314 111

PIETA HOUSE provides a specialist programme of treatment for those who have suicidal ideation or who participate in self-harming behaviours. All services are free of charge. Pieta Mid-West, Ardaulin, Mungret, Co. Limerick.

Tel 061 484 444 / 061 484 646



PLEASE TALK.IE is Ireland's student-led mental health movement. Please Talk urges students to understand that talking is a strength not of weakness, and if you are experiencing problems while at college, there are people there who you can talk to.

POSTNATAL DEPRESSION SUPPORT

ONLINE this website offers support, discussion forums and information regarding Post Natal Depression. **Tel 021 492 2083**



ROLLERCOASTER is an Irish informative pregnancy and parenting online resource offering relevant expert advice and discussion forums.



SPUNOUT.IE provides a safe online space to provide information on a range of different topics broken down into sections; education, employment, health, life and opinion.

**SUPPORTING
SUDDENLY BEREAVED
PARENTS AND
FAMILIES**



Supporting Suddenly Bereaved Parents & Families

This association offers support to families bereaved by the sudden unexpected and often unexplained death of an infant or young child and to others affected by it.

Tel 01 873 2711

sexualwellbeing.ie

brought to you by the HSE

**SEXUAL HEALTH
AND CRISIS
PREGNANCY
PROGRAMME**

A national programme tasked with implementing Ireland's first framework for sexual health and wellbeing; this includes the delivery of a programme of research, funding initiatives including crisis pregnancy counselling services, relationships and sexuality education programmes, communications campaigns, information provision and policy initiatives.



THINK CONTRACEPTION is an online source of information for men and women living in Ireland who want to learn more about their sexual and reproductive health, especially contraception.

TREOIR provides a free, confidential and up-to-date information and referral service for unmarried parents - living together or not.

Tel 01 6700 120 / LoCall 1890 252 084



information for unmarried parents

LINKS TO RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

- Access and Custody
- Abduction
- Adoption (Commencement of Adoption Amendment Act 2017)
- Being there for them
(A booklet for Grandparents whose children are parents who are not married)
- Cohabiting Parents
- Cohabitants: Rights & Entitlements
- Establishing Paternity/DNA Testing
- Explaining Family Relationships
- Family Links, steps and stages
- Guardianship
- Guardianship for unmarried fathers
- (S.I. 5 of 1998 - Guardianship Form)
- Guidelines for Best Practice – Teen Parent Support Programme publication
- Information Pack for parents who are not married to each other (2018)
- Legal Information for Unmarried Migrant Parents
- Maintenance
- Passports
- Registration of Births of children of parents who are not married to each other
- Shared Parenting
- Solo and unmarried-cohabitant parenthood and crisis pregnancy in Ireland
- Taking the Stand
- Unmarried Fathers rights and responsibilities in respect of their children
- Watch Them Grow
- Young Parent Survival Guide Issue No. 1
- Young Parent Survival Guide Issue No. 2

