

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Women and girls in Ireland have a right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including non-discriminatory access to family planning, fertility care, safe abortion, maternal care, and education. Despite the repeal of the 8th Amendment of the Constitution, barriers to abortion services, contraception, fertility treatment and maternal healthcare remain. Recommendations from the Independent Review of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 remain largely unimplemented. Comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive healthcare is not provided in schools, and pregnancy and childbirth continue to pose health risks for women, disproportionately so for marginalised groups such as Traveller, Roma, disabled and migrant women.



Key Issues

- > Significant barriers to abortion access, including a mandatory three day wait and limited service availability in some areas.
- > Sexual and reproductive rights not fully covered in school curriculums.
- > Maternal health disparities affect structurally vulnerable groups.



What actions are required by the State?



CEDAW recommendations

- > Reform school curricula to comprehensively cover sexual and reproductive rights.



- › Ensure culturally sensitive sexual and reproductive health services for all women, including rural women, disabled women and migrant women.
- › Expand the Free Contraception Scheme to all women.
- › Set clear timelines for the establishment of a Mother and Baby Unit specialising in perinatal mental health and the completion of the new National Maternity Hospital.
- › Urgently implement the recommendations of the 2023 independent review of the operation of the Health Act 2018, including full decriminalisation of abortion and abolishing the mandatory three-day waiting period.
- › Ensure availability of abortion services across the State is not compromised by conscientious objection by medical personnel.
- › Provide accessible, high-quality abortion and post-abortion care and adopt guidance on doctor-patient confidentiality.



IHREC recommendations

- › Increase investment in teacher training in Relationships and Sexuality Education and ensure it is grounded on equality and intersectionality, and introduce independent monitoring.
- › Ensure the new National Maternity Strategy delivers equal access to maternal healthcare.
- › Invest in preventing maternal morbidity and mortality amongst ethnic minority women.
- › Remove discriminatory barriers to State-funded fertility treatment.

UN Human Rights Committee recommendation

- › In 2023, the UN Human Rights Committee also specifically recommended that the State takes the necessary steps to remove existing barriers to ensure that women seeking abortions because of foetal abnormalities have adequate access to such services.

