



National Women's Council of Ireland
Comhairle Náisiúnta na mBan in Éirinn

Every Woman



**Affordable, accessible healthcare options
for women and girls in Ireland**

Context

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) is Ireland's national women's membership organisation representing 180 member groups and a growing number of individual members. We develop and promote policies and measures that are based on the diverse experiences of women. We work to ensure women's equal access, participation and recognition in Irish society. Together we are building a society that creates equality for women's life decisions.

One way in which equality is realised is through women's control of their fertility, education, contraception and maternal healthcare. This is why health and reproductive health have been a core area of NWCi's work for many years. We were closely involved in improving access to contraception, increasing maternity entitlements, advocating for affordable, quality childcare and most recently, ensuring women-centred maternity services.

As part of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 the Government has committed to develop a Women's Health Action Plan. It is in the context of our participation in the development of this plan that we are calling for the realisation of NWCi's model for reproductive healthcare.



Every Woman – Ensuring quality, universal, lifelong reproductive healthcare for women and girls in Ireland

Put women's health and lives first

A model for providing caring, comprehensive reproductive healthcare services for women and girls:

- Where the complexities of real life are being recognised in a non-judgmental way.
- Where education and non-directive support are available in order to ensure the best decisions and outcomes.
- Where women's and girls' health and well-being are being protected.
- Where a woman who needs to end a pregnancy can be cared for in Ireland.
- Where care options are accessible and affordable for all women and girls, whatever their circumstances or beliefs.
- Where we support those who provide care for women and girls.



Every Woman - Our model for reproductive healthcare services

Reproductive health matters at all stages of our lives. It begins before adolescence with sexual health education and continues beyond the years of reproduction with post-reproductive services. Reproductive health is important for all individuals, couples and families in Ireland, with most women and men needing support from reproductive services at some time in their lives.

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. It combines people's ability to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to bear children.

NWCI advocates for the provision of comprehensive reproductive and sexual health services that are designed around the lives of women and girls.



A model for reproductive healthcare includes:

Priority area	Including
Relationship and sexual health education	Relationship and sexual education programmes in school Consent programmes for young people and public information campaigns
Affordable and accessible contraception	Access to contraception, including long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) and emergency contraception
Sexual and reproductive health services	Specialist treatment for reproductive diseases Screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV
Comprehensive pregnancy care, including abortion when needed	Pre-conceptual care, including fertility treatment Maternity care, ante and post-natal care Abortion and abortion after-care
Reproductive cancer care	Vaccination, screening and treatment
Menopause services	Supports and treatments as women transition through menopause Support and advice around fertility and contraception during perimenopause

Like all health services, reproductive health services should be based on a number of key principles:

- **Private:** The confidentiality between the doctor and the patient must be protected. All decisions should be private, personal and confidential.
- **Accessible:** Care options should be publicly funded and available to all through the public health system.
- **Comprehensive:** Services should provide for all reproductive health needs of women and girls.
- **High quality:** Services must comply with best medical practice, standards and safeguards.
- **Adequately funded:** Services should receive appropriate funding that ensures timely access.



We are every woman – we are mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers and daughters. NWCI's Every Woman model of comprehensive reproductive healthcare services will ensure quality, universal, lifelong reproductive healthcare for women and girls in Ireland.

Reproductive health matters at all stages of our lives and we will need support at different times, from relationship and sexual health education; affordable and accessible contraception; sexual and reproductive health services; comprehensive pregnancy care; reproductive cancer care; and menopause services.

We seek your support for providing caring comprehensive reproductive services for women and girls.



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