

# Irish Family Planning Association

The Dublin  
Clinic that defies  
convention

## VIRGIN BOSS 'DEATH SENTENCE'

VIRGIN Records boss Richard Branson is "shocked and flabbergasted" at the £400 fine levied on a family planning clinic for selling condoms in an megastore.

...opping fine was levied on the Dublin District

By STAR REP

But an angry Branson vowed last night to sue the clinic to allow the sale of his Dub...



...g passes resolution opposing contraception laws

# 50 YEARS



# It took bravery to open a family planning centre in Ireland in 1969.

The volunteers who founded the Fertility Guidance Clinic – soon to become the IFPA – were operating at the edges of the law. They worked in defiance of the country's blanket ban on contraception to alleviate the suffering it caused.

That defiance is a trait that has defined the IFPA since then. Its very existence was a challenge to the State's ill treatment of women. And so the organisation was often under attack. But our story is one of triumph more than struggle.

With every advance in reproductive rights and health in Ireland, the IFPA has been at the vanguard. Even as reproductive choice was suppressed, we got on with the work of providing care – supplying the contraceptive pill in exchange for a donation in the 1970s; selling condoms in a record shop in the mid-1980s; opening clinics in underserved communities; pioneering pregnancy counselling and abortion information.

But the timeline of big moments on these pages can't tell the whole story. In parallel with these public milestones was work that largely went unseen, but was transformative.

At times when abortion reform was not on the political radar, or was seen as politically toxic, the IFPA never wavered in its advocacy. The association insistently took the State to task for failing in its human rights obligations to women and girls.

We engaged at all levels: making submissions to government departments, publishing reports and policy briefings, working with parliamentarians. When the Irish State refused to listen to women, the IFPA gave voice to the experience of our clients by providing

evidence to UN human rights monitoring bodies. We supported women in their challenges to the state, including A, B and C whose case against Ireland was heard by the European Court of Human Rights. We created spaces where healthcare providers and civil society could come together to discuss the harms of Ireland's abortion laws and how they might be changed.

Each meeting, each seminar, each briefing document, each connection made, each critical report by human rights bodies helped to build the momentum and the political will to bring Ireland's laws into line with its changing society and norms.

Ireland has transformed from a country where women were shamed for their sexuality and denied control over their own fertility to a state whose citizens voted for reproductive rights by a landslide.

In this new era, the IFPA still has a unique position in Ireland. Our clinics remain at the forefront of reproductive healthcare, which now includes abortion care.

But the work is not yet done. As our dedicated clinic staff and counsellors continue to care for clients, we also continue our advocacy: for the reform of Ireland's abortion laws, an end to the remaining barriers to contraception access, and the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education that meets the needs of young people.

Our successes have motivated us to work even harder now to achieve the IFPA's vision: a society where all people have the power to make informed choices about their own sexual and reproductive lives.

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## **IFPA FOUNDERS**

**Dr Dermot Hourihane**  
**Dr Jim Loughran**  
**Maire Mullarney**  
**Yvonne Pim**  
**Dr Michael Solomons**  
**Dr Robert Towers**  
**Dr Joan Wilson**

## MARCH 1969

### The Fertility Guidance Company

The doors of Ireland's first family planning clinic open on Merrion Square, Dublin. It is staffed by a group of volunteer doctors, motivated to act by the misery caused by Ireland's near-total ban on contraception. They sidestep the law by providing contraception for free in exchange for a "donation".

## The Dublin Clinic that defies convention



## SEPTEMBER 1970

Doctors at the clinic fit the first IUDs in Ireland.



## OCTOBER 1970

Members pass a resolution demanding the government repeal the ban on contraception.

## DECEMBER 1971

The Fertility Guidance Company publishes "Family Planning - A Guide for Parents and Prospective Parents".

## 1971

The Fertility Guidance Company opens its second clinic, this time on Mountjoy Square, in Dublin's North Inner City.

## JULY 1973

The Fertility Guidance Company officially becomes the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA).



## FEBRUARY 1974

The IFPA faces charges of selling, offering or advertising contraceptives. The case is dismissed in the District Court.

### **Ireland's first vasectomies**

The IFPA announces that it has performed four vasectomies at the clinic in Mountjoy Square.

## 1975

The IFPA becomes a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.



## 1973

### **A landmark legal challenge**

After her contraceptives are seized by customs, Mary McGee, a 27 year old mother of four with a history of difficult pregnancies, takes a legal challenge to Ireland's ban on contraception. With the support of the IFPA, she successfully argues that the ban violates her right to marital privacy.

## JULY 1979

### The Health (Family Planning) Act 1979

Contraception is finally legalised in Ireland, but under severe restrictions. Contraception – including condoms – is only available on prescription from a doctor for “bona fide family planning purposes”. This is interpreted to mean that only married couples are legally entitled to access contraception. At the IFPA AGM, the members resolve to continue to provide contraception for all.

## NOVEMBER 1976

### Censored

The Censorship Board bans the IFPA's family planning guidebook, originally published in 1971. It is banned on the grounds that it is “indecent or obscene”. In 1977 the IFPA wins its High Court challenge to the guidebook ban and the booklet becomes available to the public again.

## SEPTEMBER 1983

### Fined

IFPA chair Dr Andrew Rynne is fined £500 for selling condoms to a patient directly from his surgery during a weekend. It is the first case to be taken under the 1979 Act.

1984 Independent 28.9.83

### Condoms appeal Judge tells couples: 'wait until Monday'

By KATHERINE DONNELLY

A CIRCUIT COURT judge has advised that couples should “wait until Monday” if they want to avoid an unwanted pregnancy when chemist shops are closed.

Judge Frank Roe was sitting on an appeal by gynaecologist Andrew Rynne against a conviction and a £500 fine for supplying condoms directly to a patient.

After the hearing in Naas Circuit Court Judge Roe advised couples to wait until Monday for a decision.

Judge Roe stated that if a conviction is reached, it would be a “watershed moment” in the history of the country.

The judge also noted that Dr Rynne was convicted of supplying condoms to a patient.

Dr. Derek Friedman . . . called as a witness for Dr Rynne.

Mr. Robert Sheridan . . . advised on what evidence was before the court.

Dr. Andrew Rynne . . . told the court he was a “bona fide family planning” doctor.

Dr. Rynne was convicted of supplying condoms to a patient.

Condoms were originally designed to prevent the spread of venereal disease. They were later widely used as a contraceptive.

Judge Roe directed his jury to consider a doctor's duty to establish whether a condom was defined as a contraceptive.

After Rynne is acquitted an appeal will be taken by state solicitor Mr. Charles Conroy, which will be heard by the Supreme Court by way of certiorari.

Describing the case as “historic in a way,” he said that under the Act, Dr Rynne was entitled to provide an contraceptive device to a patient.

Dr Rynne was fined £500 for supplying condoms to a patient.

## SEPTEMBER 1983

### Referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution

The IFPA joins the chorus of voices in the Anti-Amendment Campaign, warning that a constitutional ban on abortion will put women in danger.

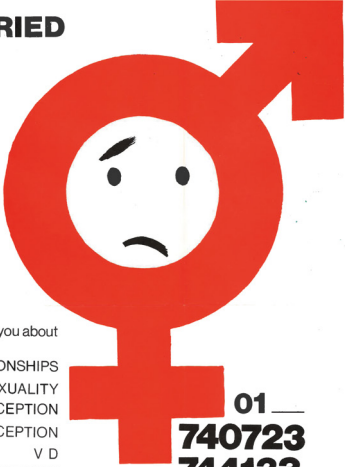
But the referendum passes and Article 40.3.3 is added to the Constitution. It gives a pregnant woman and the foetus equal status. After the referendum, the IFPA continues to advocate for abortion access.

## JANUARY 1985

### Hotline

The IFPA launches a confidential phone helpline for young people. It is available every Saturday; young people can talk to their peers about sexual health, their sexuality, their bodies and relationships. Volunteers answer hundreds of calls in the first year.

**WORRIED**



we will tell you about

- RELATIONSHIPS
- SEXUALITY
- CONCEPTION
- CONTRACEPTION
- V. D
- PREGNANCY

**act**

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SATURDAYS 1-5

**ADOLESCENT CONFIDENTIAL TELEPHONE SERVICE** by young people  
for young people

Irish Family Planning Association Project

## MARCH 1985

### Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act 1985

Minister for Health Barry Desmond – an IFPA member – deregulates the sale of condoms. For the first time, they're available without a prescription to people aged 18 and over. But they can only be provided at certain outlets, including family planning clinics.

## FEBRUARY 1988

In violation of the 1985 Act, the IFPA opens a counter selling condoms at the Virgin Megastore in Dublin.

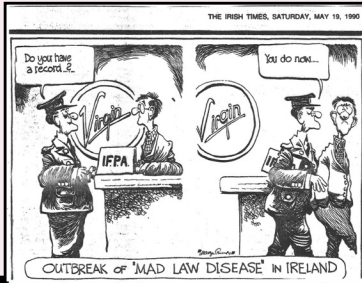
# MAY 1990

## Stories from the Silence

The IFPA produces a documentary about people living with HIV/AIDS in Ireland. The film is screened on RTÉ and later released as Ireland's first educational video on HIV/AIDS.

## Condom crackdown

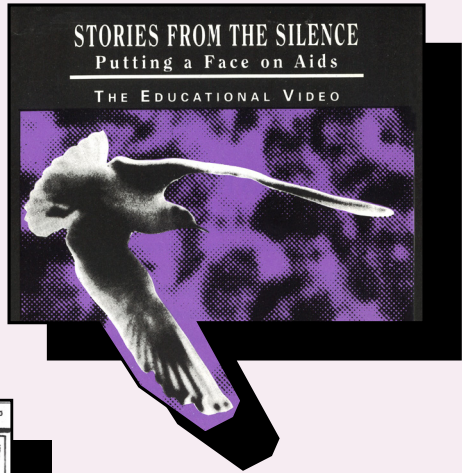
The IFPA is convicted by the District Court for selling condoms without a license in the Virgin Megastore and fined £400.



# FEBRUARY 1991

## The IFPA appeals the 1990 conviction

Richard Branson, millionaire CEO of Virgin, testifies on the IFPA's behalf. The appeal is rejected and the fine increased to £500, which the rock band U2 steps in to pay.



# VIRGIN BOSS IN CONDOM 'DEATH SENTENCE' BLAST

## Branson anger over court fine

VIRGIN Records boss Richard Branson is "shocked and flabbergasted" at the £400 fine slapped on a family planning group for selling condoms in his Dublin megastore.

The whopping fine was imposed by Dublin District Court against the Irish Family Planning Association, when a judge ruled that they breached Irish law by selling a packet of condoms.

By STAR REPORTER

But an angry Branson vowed last night to continue to allow the IFPA to retail at his Dublin outlet. He said: "I will pay the fine for the Association. Alternatively, if they appeal I will finance the appeal."

And he slammed the law here which only allows condoms to be sold through a registered doctor, chemist or clinic. He described the restrictions as a "death sentence".

Branson blasted: "I am just shocked and flabbergasted that in 1990, the era of AIDS and other diseases, that such a thing could happen."

"I think if the judge felt there had been a technical breach of the law a

nominal fine of a pound might have been in order. But the scale of the fine is quite shocking."

The millionaire added: "Ireland has one of the worst AIDS problems per head of population in the world. Ireland also has a serious drug abuse problem. The only way to stop the spread of AIDS is through the use of condoms. If condoms are not readily available AIDS will flourish."

The Virgin chief said the law here which prevented free availability of condoms was "annoying people to death."

Branson added: "I will be happy to pay the IFPA fine. And we will continue to sell condoms at Virgin in Dublin."

He added: "But this type of prosecution at a time when Ireland holds the presidency of the EC must make Ireland the laughing stock of the world."



SHOCKED: Richard

# FEBRUARY 1992

14-year-old Miss X, pregnant as a result of rape, is temporarily prevented from leaving the State to access abortion care. The Supreme Court rules that she has the right to travel for abortion care as her life is under threat from suicide.



## NOVEMBER 1992

### Another abortion referendum

Amid public outrage over the X Case, the government proposes three amendments to the constitution. The IFPA successfully campaigns for a Yes vote on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments, which guarantee the right to travel and the right to information; and a No vote on the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which would reverse the X Case judgement by removing the threat of suicide as a reason to allow an abortion to protect the life of a woman.

Following the referendum, the IFPA re-establishes its national network of pregnancy counselling centres to provide information and support to women and girls dealing with unplanned pregnancy.

## 2000

### The Irish Journey

The IFPA publishes a groundbreaking book, *The Irish Journey*. For the first time, women in Ireland tell their abortion stories in their own words.

## 2000

The All-Party Oireachtas Interest Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is founded. The IFPA is secretariat to the group, which works for the advancement of SRHR globally.

## 1997

The IFPA and UNFPA publish a poll showing massive public support for family planning and sex education in Ireland.

## JUNE 1993

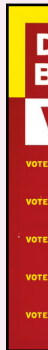
### Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act 1993

Condoms are no longer defined as a contraceptive. There are now no restrictions on where condoms can be sold or supplied, and no age restriction.

## MARCH 1999

### IFPA v Youth Defence

The IFPA fights back against anti-choice militants Youth Defence, who had invaded the Cathal Brugha Street clinic. The IFPA wins a court order preventing them from picketing or invading the premises or interfering with staff.



## MARCH 2002

### Back to the ballot box

After a campaign led by the IFPA, the Irish people reject the government's efforts to further tighten the ban on abortion. The proposed constitutional amendment would have rolled back the 1992 X Case ruling.

**DON'T STEP  
BACKWARDS  
VOTE NO**

- NO** If you agree that a pregnant girl or woman, who is suicidal, should be allowed to have an abortion in Ireland if it can help save her life.
- NO** If you agree that a girl or woman who attempts a self-induced abortion should be treated with compassion and not 12 years in jail.
- NO** If you agree that abortion should be available in Ireland to victims of rape, incest or where there are foetal abnormalities incompatible with life.
- NO** If you agree that Ireland should stop exporting abortion to England and face the reality of Irish abortions.
- NO** If you have any doubts about any of the proposals in this referendum.

## SEPTEMBER 2008

### The National Screening Service (NSS) rolls out CervicalCheck nationwide

This life-saving public health programme ensures all women aged 25 to 60 can get free cervical screening. The IFPA partners with the NSS on the successful Pearl of Wisdom campaign to raise awareness of cervical cancer and the screening programme.

## 2010

The national HPV vaccination programme begins. All girls in their first year of secondary school are offered the vaccine that protects them against the virus that causes most cervical cancers.

## 2011

The IFPA works with pharmacies to provide for over-the-counter emergency contraception. The Irish Medicines Board soon makes emergency contraception available without prescription.



## AUGUST 2005

### A, B & C v Ireland begins

In a landmark case, three women known as A, B & C challenge Ireland's restrictive abortion laws at the European Court of Human Rights. Supported by the IFPA, the women argue that the ban on abortion in Ireland endangered their health, well-being and life in breach of their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

## DECEMBER 2010

### A, B & C v Ireland verdict

The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights rules that Ireland's failure to introduce legislation on abortion constitutes a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

## OCTOBER 2012

### Death of Savita Halappanavar

Savita Halappanavar dies in Galway University Hospital after being refused a termination during miscarriage. The case causes a public outcry and increased demands to legalise abortion.

## JULY 2013

### Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act

After the X Case referendum, the A, B & C case, and the death of Savita Halappanavar, the government finally legislates to allow for abortion in Ireland when the life of the woman is in danger.

## NOVEMBER 2017

The IFPA testifies at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. The committee is tasked with considering the report and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly. The members ultimately recommend that the Eighth Amendment be repealed and abortion legalised.



## JANUARY 2018

The government announces that a referendum on the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution will take place in 2018.

## 2014

### FGM Clinic Opens

The IFPA opens Ireland's first specialist treatment clinic for women living with female genital mutilation (FGM).

## NOVEMBER 2016–APRIL 2017

### Citizens' Assembly on the Eighth Amendment

99 people drawn from across Irish society begin to consider the impact of the Eighth Amendment. They hear testimony from experts across disciplines, including the IFPA.

The Assembly agrees by an overwhelming majority that Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution should be repealed. 64% of the members vote in favour of access to abortion with no restriction as to reason.

## MAY 2018

### A historic vote

The IFPA is at the forefront of the campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. On 25<sup>th</sup> May, Repeal passes with a landslide of 66%. Abortion care will become safe and legal in Ireland.



## 2018

After the referendum, work gets underway to legislate for legal abortion in Ireland. The IFPA works closely with parliamentarians, the HSE, maternity hospitals and other organisations to ensure that women and girls in Ireland can access high quality abortion care.

## 2019

The IFPA celebrates 50 momentous years at the forefront of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Ireland.

The organisation remains dedicated to working towards a society where all people can make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive lives.

## JANUARY 2019

For the first time, the IFPA begins providing abortion care at its clinics in Dublin City Centre and Tallaght.