



Sherie de Burgh

It concluded that the defendants were assisting in the ultimate destruction of life through abortion, that there was no constitutional right to information about abortion.

Ruling of the Attorney General, Society for the Protection of Unborn Children v. Open Door Counselling 1988.



Sherie de Burgh at a "One Family" press conference 2004.
Source: *The Irish Times*.

Sherie de Burgh was born in London to Irish parents in 1952. Leaving school at 14, her teenage years were exciting but sometimes difficult. In addition to extended visits to India and the Canary Islands, she worked in shops and restaurants to support herself and her young son, at one point she lived in a tent on Killiney Hill.



Cave house at La Gomera, Canary Islands.

Killiney Hill.
Source: *The Irish Times*.

Despite her lack of formal education she displayed talent and resilience, working as a make-up artist for the 1989 film *My Left Foot*. Later on, she secured a qualification in professional counselling from *Maynooth University*.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as legal debate and public opinion considered the constitutional dimensions of reproductive rights, Sherie focused on the practical assistance of women experiencing crisis pregnancies, something that was often overlooked as the debates surrounding the 1992 'X case' raged.

It was in 1992 that Sherie joined the *Irish Family Planning Association*, which had been founded in 1969 to provide and advocate for reproductive rights. She led the establishment of nationwide non-directive crisis pregnancy counselling services and was also instrumental in the training of other councillors.



X-case protest 1992.
Source: *R.T.E.*

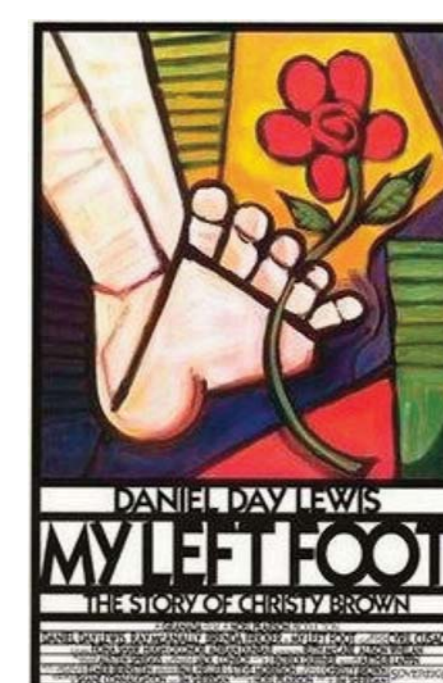
Sherie demonstrated a keen and compassionate interest in vulnerable members of society, especially for women experiencing crisis pregnancies in an age when access to contraception was difficult or impossible. This led her to volunteer as a councillor for the Open Line helpline, which provided advice to women in crisis pregnancies. This phone line had been created after an earlier attempt to provide face-to-face advice had been successfully challenged in the High Court by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children in 1988.

In 2004 she moved to *One Family*, a national organisation which supports and advocates for one parent families. As director of counselling services, she continued to remain apolitical and focused on the practical needs of individuals rather than the public debates that these issues often generated.



Establishment of One Family/Cherish 1972.
Source: *One Family*

Sherie died after a long illness in February 2017. While her public profile was not as raised as individuals involved in the legal and public debates surrounding women's reproductive rights, her focus on the care and welfare of individuals, and the training and development of the next generation of councillors contributed to a more compassionate and inclusive twenty-first century Ireland.



Poster for *My Left Foot* 1989.
Source: *Palace Pictures*.

Repeal of eight amendment referendum results at Dublin Castle 2018.
Source: *The Irish Times*.

