



The National Federation of Services for
Unmarried Parents and their Children

Annual Report



2012

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Lr Mayor Street
IFSC
Dublin 1
Tel:01 - 6700 120



The National Federation of Services for
Unmarried Parents and their Children

VISION

Treoir's vision is an Ireland which treats unmarried families with equality and respect in its Constitution, laws and services

MISSION

Treoir, in partnership with its member agencies, promotes the rights and best interests of unmarried parents and their children through providing specialist information and advocating for their rights

VALUES

Integrity, respect, empathy, inclusion, professionalism, flexibility, optimism

PRINCIPLES

Treoir

- *recognises the diversity of family life in Ireland*
- *recognises that all families, including unmarried families, have the same rights to respect, care, support, protection and recognition*
- *supports and promotes the rights of all children as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *believes that all children have a right to know, be loved and cared for by both parents.*



The National Federation of Services for
Unmarried Parents and their Children

Treoir is the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children. In 1976 various agencies working with unmarried parents formed a federation to channel efforts and improve the quality of the services provided to unmarried parents and their children. Members include self-help organisations, adoption societies, maternity hospitals, childcare organisations, HSE and accommodation services. In 1995 the Federation was renamed Treoir, which is the Irish word for direction or guidance.

Treoir, in partnership with its member agencies, promotes the rights and best interests of unmarried parents and their children through providing specialist information and advocating for their rights.

Treoir:

1. operates a free, confidential **National Specialist Information and Referral Service** on all aspects of unmarried parenthood, providing clear and up-to-date information **free of charge** to parents who are not married to each other and to those involved with them. These include:

- unmarried expectant parents
- unmarried parents living apart
- unmarried parents cohabiting
- teen parents
- opposite and same sex parents
- grandparents and other relatives
- those working with unmarried parents and their families

2. manages the national co-ordination of the Teen Parents Support Programme

3. advocates on behalf of unmarried parents and their children.

You're brilliant! We find you the best to deal with for that type of information (legal and social welfare)

CIC Waterford, March 2012



Foreword

The Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015 was completed and establishes a clear direction for Treoir in the coming years.

The profile of Treoir's client group has changed over the years with the continuing rise in births outside marriage and the rise in the age of mothers at birth. In 2012, 35% of all births were outside marriage /civil partnership. During 2012, 55% of queries to Treoir came from clients aged 30 years and over, and 61% of all queries were legal in nature. The conclusion is that despite the increasing age profile of clients, confusion and misinformation continue to be a major issue for unmarried parents in Ireland. Treoir has continued to respond to the changing client group. One example is that following the enactment in 2011 of *The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010*, which established the concept of cohabitation in Irish law (a family not based on marriage) Treoir engaged more fully with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) parents, who are also unmarried parents.

The impact of recent Budgets has been devastating on recipients of One-parent Family Payment, the vast majority of whom are unmarried parents. While the basic rate of the Payment has been maintained the income disregard for those parents working part-time is being steadily eroded. In addition the cumulative effect of cuts to other payments such as Child Benefit, Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, Rent Supplement etc. and to other services is proving distressing for parents. The introduction of an age limit of the youngest child of age seven caused serious concerns, given the lack of supports available. The provision of education and training are key aspects of any activation model along with accessible, flexible, good quality childcare.

I would like to take this opportunity, in my last year as Chairwoman of Treoir, to extend my sincere thanks to council members and particularly members of the Executive, who have guided and supported me over the years. I would also like to compliment and thank all the staff for a job well done. In particular I want to thank Margaret Dromey who led the team efficiently and effectively throughout another challenging year.

Leonie Lunny
Chairwoman



A note from the CEO

Though challenging, 2012 was a very exciting year for Treoir and much was achieved. Since its inception Treoir has campaigned for the initiation of a national longitudinal study of children. With funding from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme (CPP) Treoir undertook a study of 9-month olds of Solo parents, Unmarried-cohabitant parents and Married parents. The study is due for publication in 2013. We are delighted that funding has been secured from the HSE CPP for a further analysis when the children are three years. The evidence of the impact on children of growing up in different family types will become apparent over time, though initial findings show the very disadvantaged position of Solo parents and their children.

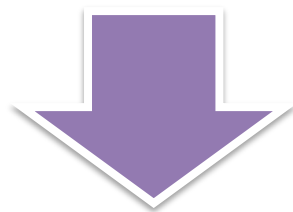
Feedback from the Strategic Planning process clearly pointed to the need to promote the Information Service and we focused a great deal of time and effort on this. We also developed our use of social media to engage more effectively with our users.

Key projects undertaken by the staff of Treoir as well as information work are detailed in the report. I would like to express my appreciation to the staff whose diligence, commitment and loyalty is second to none. My thanks also to our council members for their guidance and support. In particular I wish to pay tribute to our outgoing Chairwoman, Leonie Lunny, from whom I have learned so much and under whose chairmanship the organisation has flourished.

Margaret Dromey
CEO

It has been great working with you and the Treoir team over the years. I have always been impressed by your can-do attitude and desire for constant improvement.

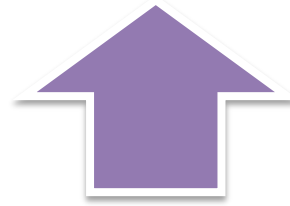
Funder



Treoir Council



Treoir Staff



Treoir Executive

Leonie Lunny
Berit Andersen,
Eilish Craig, HSE
Christina Hughes,
Mary McGovern

Chairwoman
Vice-Chair
Treasurer
Secretary
HSE Section 20, Dublin

Treoir Council

Phyllis Crowe
Anne Egan
Louise Graham

TPSP Limerick
Law Lecturer, NUI Galway
Cura National

Mary McCarthy
Ciara McKenna
Thomas Quigley

Life National
National Maternity Hospital
Bessborough Care Centre,
Cork
Doras Buí, Dublin

Siobhán Roddy

Treoir Honorary Members

Dermot Walsh
Gemma Rowley

Honorary President
Honorary Life Member

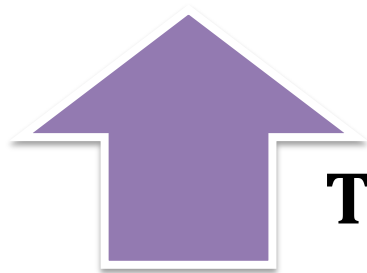
Treoir Staff

Margaret Dromey
Margot Doherty
Margaret Morris

Chief Executive Officer
Assistant Chief Executive
National Co-ordinator
Teen Parents Support
Programme
Senior Information Officer
Information Officer
Dissemination Project Officer
Office Manager
Office Assistant

We have all your books and they are an enormous help

Grandmother, June 2012



Treoir Members

National Agencies

Barnardos

www.barnardos.ie

CURA

www.cura.ie

Foróige

www.foroige.ie

Health Service Executive

www.hse.ie

Home-Start

www.homestartireland.ie

Life Pregnancy Care Service

www.life.ie

Carlow

St. Catherine's Community Services Centre

www.catherines.ie

Clare

Clarecare

www.clarecare.ie

Cork

Bessborough Care Centre

www.bessboroughcarecentre.ie

St. Anne's Day Nursery

Dublin

Aislínn

The Base Youth Service

www.thebase.ie

Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital

www.coombe.ie

Cúnamh

www.cunamh.com

Doras Bui

www.dorasbui.org

Miss Carr's Home Housing Association

www.misscarrs.ie

National Maternity Hospital

www.nmh.ie

PACT

www.pact.ie

Rotunda Hospital

www.rotunda.ie

St. Patrick's Guild

Limerick

Limerick Social Services Council

www.lssc.ie

Mary Immaculate College

www.mic.ul.ie

Roscommon

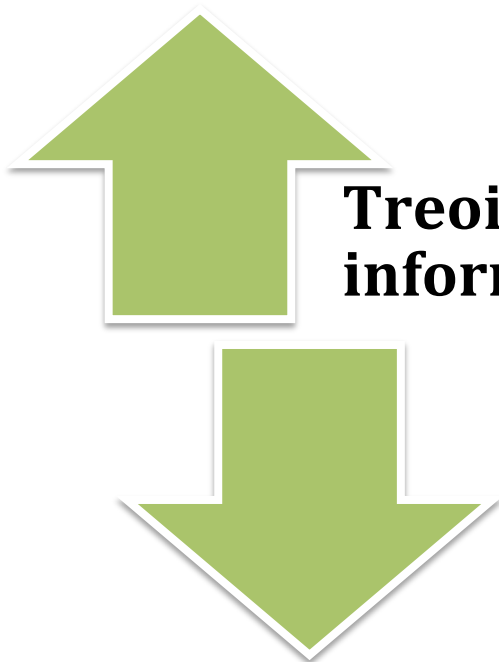
Boyle Family Life Centre

www.familylifecentre.ie

Sligo

Sligo Social Service Council

www.sligosocialservices.com

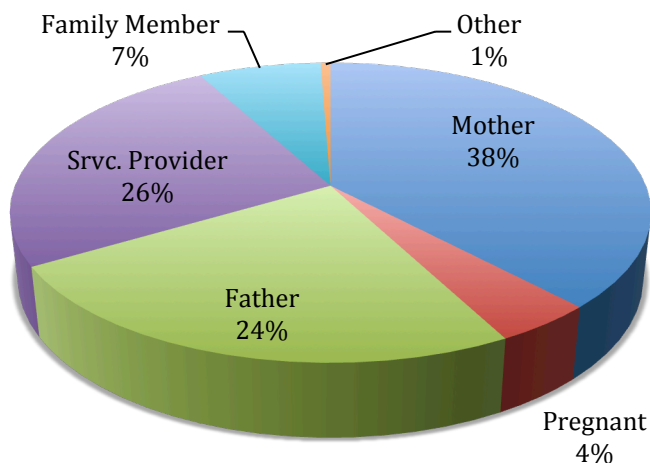


Treoir national specialist information service

Treoir will maintain and develop the national specialist information service for unmarried parents, same or opposite sex, expectant parents, parents living together or apart, their extended families and those working with them

Clients

There were approximately 8,000 queries dealt with by the Treoir information team in 2012. The majority of calls received were made by parents – 62%, followed by service providers – 26%. Service providers were made up of Citizens Information Workers, Health/HSE Professionals, Legal Professionals, Mediators, Counsellors and others.



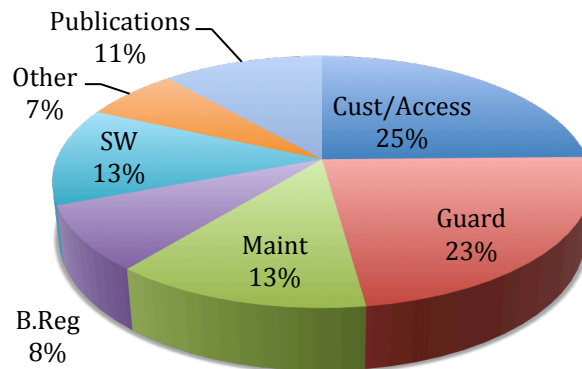
In 2012 as in other years, we were frequently reminded of the misinformation in circulation on many important issues, not only among parents, but also among service providers.

Please thank everyone in Treoir for the wonderful service you give
CIC worker, Carlow (December 2012)

Type of Query

The majority of queries to the National Specialist Information Service were legal in nature – 61%. Many of these were complex and required an in-depth response. These queries concerned access, guardianship, maintenance, birth registration, passports etc.

Many parents contacting Treoir were in cohabiting relationships and required information on the legal status of their relationship. Pregnant women contacting the Centre are generally sent an Information Pack and if the pregnancy is a crisis are referred to one of the publicly funded Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Services.

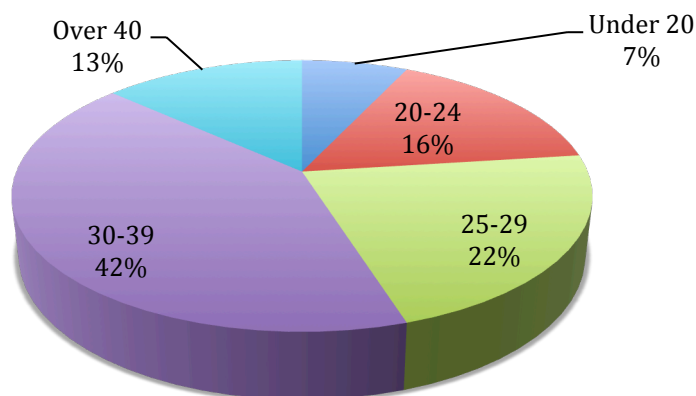


We had a significant number of requests for our publications. Many individuals were happy to download them from the website.

Age of Parent

The Central Statistics Office¹ shows that in 2012, 35% of all births were outside marriage/civil partnership with just over 57% of these births to parents at the same address. The largest number of births outside marriage was in the 25 – 29 age group (30%), while for married/civil partnership parents it was in the 30 – 34 age group (42%).

A very significant number of queries to Treoir came from clients in the 30 – 39 age group and just 7% were from women under 20 years.



¹ Vital Statistics, Fourth Quarter and Yearly Summary 2012, Central Statistics Office, Dublin 2013

In 2012 Treoir, with the support of the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, invested in a new database system that will produce significantly better reports on the users of the National Specialist Information Service and will allow analysis of information on our clients at a far more detailed level. It will also help us track activity with service providers.

Website

The website continues to draw many visitors with just under 20,000 people visiting the Treoir website in 2012. Sixty Three per cent of these were new visitors with 37% returning visitors. The website is constantly updated with new publications and items of interest to unmarried parents.

In 2012, a research report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) parents² identified a gap in information provision for LGBT families. It recommended an information point for these parents and Treoir began work on establishing a new section on the Treoir website for LGBT parents, who are, of course, unmarried parents. A grant was received from the Community Foundation of Ireland to develop the project.

Publications

The *Information Pack for Unmarried Parents*, 2012 edition, was produced and twelve thousand copies were published and disseminated to parents, family members, CICs, health professionals, maternity hospitals etc. We commenced the updating of the Treoir Information Leaflets, which deal with issues such as Birth Registration, Establishing Paternity, Custody, Access, Guardianship, Unmarried Fathers, Shared Parenting, Passports and Child Abduction, and these will go to print in early 2013. All new publications are automatically uploaded to the Treoir website for easy access.

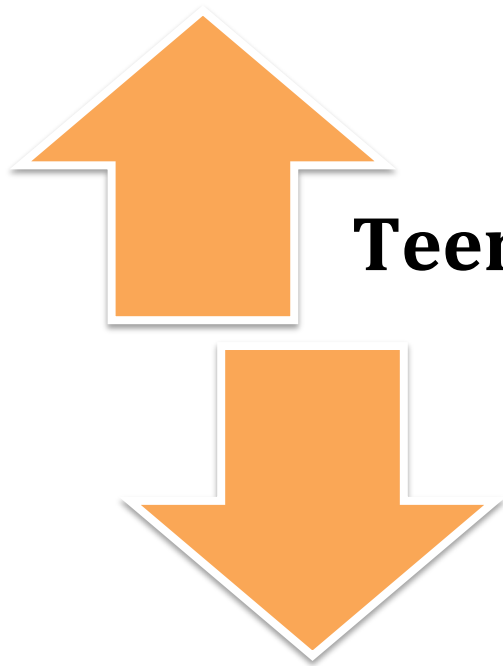
Outreach training sessions for professionals and parents

Treoir has developed a series of excellent workshops for unmarried parents, extended families and professionals working with unmarried parents on all aspects of unmarried parenthood. Each workshop can be tailored to the needs of different groups of unmarried parents (solo parents, cohabiting parents, LGBT parents), different groups of professionals and on different topics.

In 2012 Treoir hosted twenty-seven outreach sessions for professionals and parents throughout the country. Outreach sessions were held for such diverse groups as HSE adoption social workers, Irish Association of Social Workers, workers in family resource centres, professionals working with young parents including the Teen Parent Support Programmes, social service centres, probation officers, CICs, grandparents support groups and crisis pregnancy counselling agencies. There was an increasing demand for workshops for cohabitants as a result of the enactment of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010.

Please tell Veronica that thanks to her help I got my situation sorted – you're a great resource

² LGBT Parents in Ireland, Pillinger J, Fagan, P., Report commissioned by LGBT Diversity, 2013



Teen Parents

Treoir will support those working with young parents in Ireland

The national co-ordinator of the TPSP continued to work with the eleven projects around the country in a variety of ways:

Meetings

There were many on-going meetings with and support of individual projects.

Other meetings were hosted including with:

- TPSP staff
- TPSP National Advisory Committee.
- TPSP host organisations.

There was follow-up work on issues such as access to One-parent Family Payment, Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Medical Cards, Childcare, School Completion Programme and also the issue of repeat pregnancies among teens.

Collation of information

Information on the users of the Teen Parents Support Programme was collected, collated and analysed. The results are contained in the 2012 Annual Report of the TPSP.

Policy Issues

A meeting was held with Frances Fitzgerald, T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs regarding childcare for mothers in second level education. This is being followed up with officials of the Department.

Separate meetings were held with the CEO of the National Education and Welfare Board and the School Completion Programme staff in The Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

An annual meeting was held with housing welfare officers in three of the Dublin local authorities and representatives of the four Dublin TPSPs.

TPSP Website / Publications

A new national website was developed for the TPSP. It contains information on the local TPSPs, information on support and education and has special sections for fathers and grandparents. It is regularly updated with relevant news items. (www.tpsp.ie).

The Annual Report for the TPSP 2012 was produced and disseminated to key stakeholders.

TPSP Tool Kit

A Tool Kit for those working with young parents was initiated in 2012 with funding received from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme. A significant amount of consultation with TPSP project workers was undertaken in the process of developing the Tool Kit. It is due for publication in 2013.

Other

The specialist knowledge of the national coordinator assisted the information officers in the National Specialist Information Service with enquiries in relation to young parents, age of consent etc.

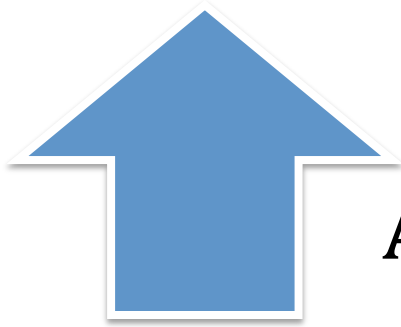
The coordinator also assisted the Department of Children and Youth Affairs regarding a PQ and the HSE regarding progress report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

On behalf of Sandra and all the participants (including myself!) who attended your information workshop I would like to thank you most sincerely for your most informative and stimulating presentations. Feedback from both our Young Mums and the LSSC Staff has been excellent as you helped to clarify a number of questions that they had regarding the legal rights of the families they work with.

On a personal note I'd like to thank you for your ongoing support of my work here in TPSP Limerick, it's great to know you are only a phone-call way!

Hope you take a well-earned break over the Summer!

Project Leader - Teen Parents Support Programme Limerick



Advocacy



Treoir will advocate effectively on behalf of unmarried parents, to ensure the best outcomes for them and their children

Policy Submissions/Meetings

During 2012 Treoir made the following submissions (which are available on the Treoir website www.treoir.ie)

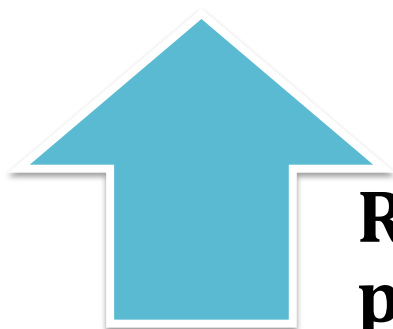
- * Pre-budget submission to the Department of Social Protection
- * Submissions to the Family Law Court Development Committee of the Court Services Board
- * Submission to the Joint Committee on Health and Children on the Children First Bill 2012
- * Submission to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald T.D. on the Age of Consent

We met with Minister for Justice Alan Shatter T.D., to discuss the implementation of changes proposed by the Law Reform Commission on “Legal Aspects of Family Relationships”.

Research

Since its foundation in 1976 Treoir has campaigned for the initiation of a national longitudinal study of children in Ireland in order to ascertain the outcomes for the children of unmarried parents. Some thirty years later the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study was commissioned by the government.

With financial assistance from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme Treoir commissioned a study in 2012, using the GUI data on 11,134 infants who were nine months old when the data was collected. 34% of births are now outside of marriage and as the majority of these births (60%) are to families where both parents reside at the same address, Treoir saw a need to examine not only the data on solo unmarried parents and their children but also on cohabiting unmarried families. Outcomes for these groups were compared with those for married families. The study will be published in 2013.



Raising awareness / public relations



Treoir will continue to raise awareness on issues affecting unmarried parents and will promote the availability of Treoir services

Articles

Due to the large number of individual GPs and PHNs, all of whom work with unmarried parents, it was decided that it would be more cost and time efficient to raise their awareness of Treoir and its services through their professional publications. Treoir published articles in a number of professional magazines and other journals including:

Forum: Journal of the Irish College of General Practitioners

May 2012: *Can unmarried fathers consent to treatment?*

Nursing in general practice: The Journal of the Irish Practice Nurses Association

May/June 2012: *Can unmarried parents consent to medical treatment?*

Institute of Community Health Nursing Newsletter

June 2012: *Treoir: Informing Unmarried Parents*

Childminding Ireland Newsletter

Summer 2012: *Information piece about the work of Treoir*

The SVP Bulletin

Autumn 2012: *The Challenges of Parenting Alone*

Press Releases

A number of press releases were issued during the year on the following topics:

Teen Parents Support Programme horrified at treatment of young mother (January 2012)

Ireland not yet ready for a single working age payment (March 2012)

Understanding Childhood Deprivation in Ireland (April 2012)

Children have a right to know who they are (May 2012)

Unmarried parents – numbers on the rise (October 2012)

Referendum on children's rights (November 2012)

A number of *letters to the papers* by Treoir were published on such topics as the rights of unmarried dads, young parents and education, preparing for the Children's Referendum, compulsory birth registration and on the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill.

Media Interviews

Senior staff of Treoir were interviewed for a number of radio and TV stations including TG4, RTE, several local radio stations.

Website and Social Media Platforms

During 2012 Treoir received a small grant from the Community Foundation to expand our website to include information relevant to LGBT parents. The research and technical adjustments to the site were carried out in 2012 and the section will go live in 2013. Also Google granted Treoir free advertising to a total value of \$10,000 per month.

We engage with our client group of parents through Facebook and Twitter and we aim to ensure weekly posts on relevant issues.

eBulletin

An online eBulletin was produced and disseminated twice in 2012 - April and August - containing all the latest news on matters relating to unmarried parents and those working on their behalf.

Other activities to raise awareness

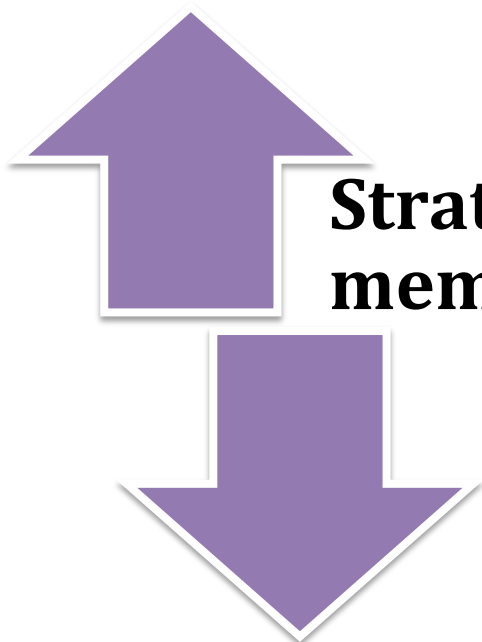
All Dublin **Maternity Hospitals** and a number outside Dublin were visited and key personnel were introduced to the wide range of information materials of Treoir. Many hospitals agreed to display the information materials for their patients and we have negotiated with a number of hospitals that they would have our PowerPoint presentation on relevant issues for unmarried parents showing in waiting areas of their hospitals.

We produced a **video** (inhouse) for pregnant women and entered it in the Better Together competition of the Wheel.

We spoke at a number of gatherings on the Children's Referendum.

I've been on to you before and on your website – it's fantastic!

Parent, August 2012



Strategic alliances / membership

Treoir will develop strategic alliances and seek to engage more fully with members

Treoir staff are represented on various committees including:

HSE Crisis Pregnancy Agency Advisory Committee
HSE Crisis Pregnancy Accommodation Committee
Centre for Effective Services committee on parenting
Courts users committee.

Treoir is a member of the following networks:

Children's Rights Alliance
Social Policy Network
Social Policy Association
Social Research Association
Equality and Rights Alliance
Social Justice Ireland
The Wheel

Treoir staff attended many meetings throughout the year including those organised by:

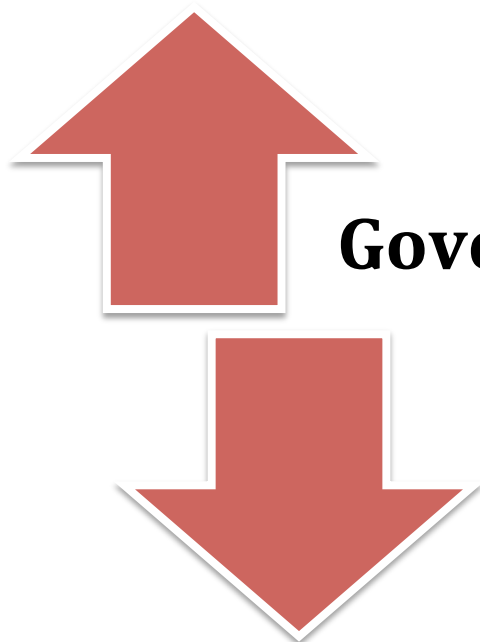
NERI Nevin Economic Research Institute
PILA Public Interest Law Alliance
NUI Maynooth Masterclass
NWC National Women's Council
Irish Research Council
Growing Up in Ireland
The Wheel

It says in the Papers

This is a media alert service that Treoir provides to its members on a daily basis. Relevant news items from the three main newspapers, Irish Times, Irish Examiner and Irish Independent on issues relating to unmarried parents, are accessed online and the links are sent by email to our members.

Thanks a million for the up-date from the daily papers. I find it fantastic for my lectures

Member, October 2012



Governance

Treoir will have a robust governance and HR system to deliver a professional service which is fully compliant with company and charity legislation

Strategic Plan

Throughout 2012 the Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016 was prepared. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders and clients by an independent consultant. The Plan was approved by the Council and is available on the Treoir website.

A strong commitment was made in the Strategy to ensure good governance and an emphasis was placed on ensuring that as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity Treoir would meet all legal obligations.

A good deal of work was carried out to ensure that we could sign up to and comply with the Voluntary Code of Governance for the community and voluntary sector.

Treoir was represented at a meeting in Farmleigh House where Minister Howlin launched a policy paper on regulation of lobbyists in July 2012 and senior staff regularly attended meetings hosted by The Wheel on good governance.

Staff attended child protection training provided by the HSE.

During the year there were five council meetings and four Executive meetings held.

*Can I request some copies of the publication Family Links please, **this is a great resource and covers many topics which people are enquiring about at present.** Can I also be put on the mailing list please.*

Community & Family Resource Centre, April 2012



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the following for their support during the year:

- Our main funders – HSE, HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Citizens Information Board
- Community Foundation of Ireland for a grant to develop an LGBT section on our website
- Google who continue to provide free advertising for Treoir on the internet
- Staff of the Departments of Social Protection and Justice and Law Reform who are always very helpful to Treoir in responding to our many queries
- Ms. Deirdre McTigue who very generously conducted interviews as part of our strategic planning process – free of charge
- Mr. Anthony McCashin, TCD was hugely supportive throughout the GUI research project
- Public Interest Law Association (PILA) which assisted Treoir by undertaking research on age of consent in various countries and ascertained how they deal with the issue of consensual sexual activity among minors
- Our member agencies who released their staff to attend council, executive and other meetings
- Numerous agencies (other than member agencies) with whom we collaborated during the year: OPEN, One Family, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Wheel, The Children's Rights Alliance and many others

The resources and information are excellent
Community and Family Resource Centre, September 2012