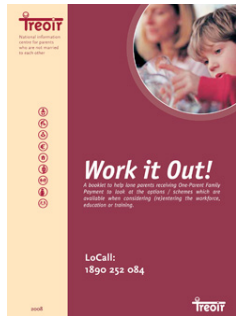


January/February 2008



Launch of 'Work it Out'

The 3rd edition of 'Work it Out' was launched by Mr. Martin Cullen, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs on February 28th in the National Information Centre for parents who are not married to each other (Treoir). Speaking at the launch the Minister said, *"Information initiatives such as this booklet, empowers people to consider their options and access their rights. I am happy to launch this easy-to-follow guide which will prove invaluable to lone parents looking at their options when they are starting work or re-entering the workforce, or returning to education and training".* At the launch Minister Cullen, referring to the Government's discussion paper 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents', said *"In essence this discussion paper aims to point the way towards new opportunities and greater fulfillment for lone parents and towards better lives and prospects for their children. One of the proposed reforms in that document and one that I know is of particular interest to Treoir, is the removal of the cohabitation rule which acts as a disincentive to lone parents forming relationships. ...The social welfare system should be neutral with regard to people's choice of lifestyle or living arrangements. It should not be a disincentive to family formation".* Under the proposals a new payment would be made to all parents (living alone or with a partner) with young children on a low income. Minister Cullen said: *"I intend to bring forward proposals for legislation that will*

have at its core the introduction of a policy that will set about opening up more choices and opportunities for lone parents."



Veronica Black, Information Officer, Minister Cullen, Margaret Dromey, CEO at the launch

Copies of 'Work it Out' are available free of charge (Treoir would appreciate cost of postage for multiple copies) from Treoir, 01-6700120 and is available on our website, www.treoir.ie.

Lunch-Time @ Treoir

The next meeting for Members of Treoir will be held in Treoir's offices on Thursday 3rd April at 12:30. Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel, will outline details of the Charities Bill which is currently at discussion stage.

Eglinton House

Treoir was dismayed to learn of the impending closure of Eglinton House, a member agency of Treoir, an ante/post natal service for pregnant women in Dublin who need support. This service, which moved to Eglinton Road from St. Parick's Home in the Navan Road, is a critical residential service for vulnerable mothers who need this vital support in order to overcome significant challenges in the early days of their children's lives. That the HSE is planning to move this specialised residential service into the community as "part of an enhancement of the service" appears contradictory. Treoir will follow this up with the HSE.

Fathers' rights can be sought under EU law

Speaking at a Bar Council conference on the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr. McDowell SC said that the rights of unmarried fathers can be fought for in the Irish courts through the Convention. Mr. McDowell said *"In a society where one-third of children are being brought up in family units not based on matrimony . . . the view that a natural father who is caring for his children in such circumstances has absolutely no constitutional rights or protection in respect of his relationship with his children . . . is increasingly untenable"*.

(Irish Times
25/2/2008)



Family Law Reporting Pilot Project

Arising from the findings of the Family Law Reporting Pilot Project, Carol Coulter has made a number of recommendations.

Amongst these are that:

- Mediation should be compulsory in family law cases where children's welfare is a priority
- The minister should consider allowing the press to report on non-identifying family law proceedings
- The Government should examine the possibility of a Family Court Division of the Circuit Court. Such a division would be based around the provision of 15 regional centres – each equipped with information offices and mediation facilities.
- The Central Statistics Office should be asked to extend its examination of statistics in the Courts Service to family law.

CSO Statistics for 2nd Quarter of 2007

There were 17,127 births registered in quarter 2 of 2007 of which 5,428 births were outside marriage. This accounted for 31.7% of all births, an increase of 0.1% on quarter 2 of 2006. The highest percentage of births outside marriage occurred in Limerick City at 54%, while the lowest percentage was in Cork County at 22%.

There were 581 births registered outside marriage to mothers under the age of 20 in quarter 2 of 2007. This accounted for 11% of all births outside marriage and 3% of all births.

For the first time ever the CSO has produced figures for births registered to unmarried parents living at the same address. We can see from the figures for this quarter that 52% of all births registered as outside marriage were to parents living at the same address. The highest percentage of births to unmarried parents living at the same address was in Waterford city (28%) and the lowest such percentage was in Co. Longford (10%). See table below.

Births registered as outside marriage

Age of Mother	Births Registered	Same Address	% at same address
Under 20	581	115	20
20-24	1545	667	43
25-29	1592	938	59
30-34	1005	632	63
35-39	557	360	66
40 and over	146	101	69
TOTAL	5428	2815	52

Council is to change social housing rules

Dublin City Council is planning to make a number of changes to its social housing rules. Among these are:

- A change in its system for allocating social housing in a move that will prioritise single parents. The current system works on the basis of awarding points to applicants i.e. five points for the applicant, three points per child and an additional 20 points for listing a partner or spouse. This system has been challenged through the Equality Commissioner and it has now been decided to eliminate the weighting in favour of two-parent families. From now on each member of the household will be allocated 20 points.
- A change in relation to the system whereby a child would automatically inherit a council flat or house from their parent. This is to stop those who have sufficient resources to pay for private accommodation from keeping the property in the family. Applications will be considered on an individual basis.
- A new provision is to be introduced to stop prospective tenants from refusing what the Council sees as a 'reasonable offer of accommodation'. The council intends to put applications on hold for up to a year if the applicant has refused three offers of accommodation without a satisfactory explanation.

Community Childcare Subvention Scheme

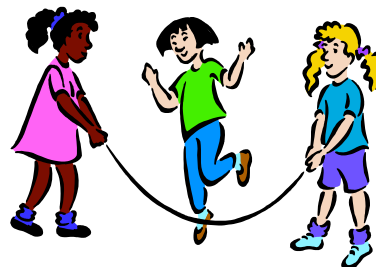
In January 2008, the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) was introduced and is currently at a transitional stage with a view to being fully operational by July 2008. The CCSS has been allocated €153 million over the next 3 years. It will provide support for community childcare services to provide reduced childcare fees for disadvantaged parents.

The level of grant which individual services will get will depend on the level of service

being provided and the profile of the parents who avail of the service. To ensure fairness, a tiered fee structure will now apply in all cases. What this means is that:

- Parents who are receiving social welfare payments or are taking part in CE or similar schemes will qualify for a €100 weekly subvention for full-day care (and proportional amounts for shorter hours)
- Parents receiving Family Income Supplement (FIS) will qualify for a €70 weekly subvention
- Low Income parents with income above the FIS threshold i.e. €490 in the case of a parent with one child, may qualify for a subvention of €45 a week.
- A further €30 a week will be paid in respect of children aged less than one year.

For parents whose children are attending a childcare provider that is in receipt of capital grants under this scheme (CCSS) and who do not qualify for the subvention, the price should be lower than the commercial rate. For further information contact the Office of the Minister for Children on ☎ 01 6354000, www.omc.gov.ie or see www.pobal.ie



Time4Us

Time 4 Us is a play centre, based in Galway, for parents who do not reside with their children. The centre provides support in a comfortable, caring environment, creating opportunities for parents to develop and build a positive relationship with their children. Opening hours are provided on afternoons, evenings and weekends. For further information contact Majella or Deirdre on ☎ 091-763510 or 086 8113511.

The Student Support Bill

The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin TD, published The Student Support Bill on February 5th 2008. This Bill proposes a number of changes including:

- A new single unified grant scheme to be administered by the vocational education committees (VECs)
- A new independent appeals board to be introduced
- A new requirement to be resident in the State for 3 of the previous 5 years
- Provides for a definition of approved institutions and courses
- Students under 23 and living away from home to be independently assessed for the purposes of a grant.

It is intended that these changes will come into effect for the 2009/2010 academic year. Existing arrangements will continue to apply to grant applications for 2008/2009.

The Student Support Bill may be downloaded at www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=8749&=59

EAPN Ireland

EAPN Ireland is the Irish National network of the European Anti Poverty Network (Europe), which aims to put the fight against poverty at the top of the EU, national and local agenda. The EAPN Ireland network has produced four leaflets bringing together some of the key issues and recommendations arising from the project activities. These activities included discussion at regional meetings and focus groups of people experiencing the issues and three policy papers developed for the project. The aim of the leaflets is to inform members of society and to stimulate discussion on some of the key issues and possible solutions related to the areas.

Leaflet 1: Poverty in Ireland

Leaflet 2: Integration of New Communities

Leaflet 3: Access to Employment for those Most Excluded

Leaflet 4: Access to Affordable Childcare for Low Income Families. These Leaflets are available on www.eapn.ie/poverty together with a 'Report from the Regional Seminars'.

PUBLICATIONS

A Social Portrait of People of Working Age in Ireland

The social portrait of people of working age is the third in a series that was commissioned by the Office for Social Inclusion from the Economic and Social Research Institute. The portrait provides extremely comprehensive and useful statistical information in relation to lone parents. A detailed report on this publication will be included with our next Bulletin. It is available from Government Publications, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 ☎ 01-6476834 (€1) or download at www.socialinclusion.ie

Money Lending and the Law

Moneylending and the Law is a practical guide for borrowers, outlining the protection to which they are entitled in law when taking out a loan with a licensed moneylender. This publication is the work of Paul Joyce, barrister, Senior Policy Researcher with the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC). For more information contact FLAC on ☎ 01-8745690 or see www.flac.ie

Information Leaflets

Treoir's '*Establishing Paternity*' leaflet has been updated. Other Information Leaflets include custody, access, guardianship, registering a birth, applying for passports etc. The leaflets are available on request from Treoir free of charge, or may be downloaded at www.treoir.ie.

Legal information for unmarried parents is available in 6 languages - Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Russian and Polish and is available on our website. www.treoir.ie