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***SUBMISSION***

*to*

***Central Statistics Office***

***on the questionnaire content***

***for the***

***2006 Census of Population***

***from***



**the national federation of services for unmarried parents and their children**

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## CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

### *Enumeration of unmarried parents living with their own parents*

In Appendix 2 of the recently published Volume 3 of the 2002 Census – ‘*Household Composition and Family Units*’ it states that

*“there may be a limited number of cases where an unmarried parent with one or more children lives with his/her parents and the information given on the relationship to Person 1 does not clearly identify the parent/child relationships. In such cases, the unmarried parent and children are subsumed in another family unit. As a result of this the number of family units identified as consisting of unmarried parents with children is probably understated to some degree”.*

Given that over 70% of births to unmarried parents in Ireland are to women under 25, who are themselves likely to be living in the family home, it is highly likely that a considerable number of these unmarried families are residing within the larger family household.

This continued deficiency in the collection of Census data has long been a difficulty for those working with unmarried parents in Ireland. It is impossible to enumerate with any accuracy the number of unmarried families in Ireland and the number of lone parent families in Ireland.

In the NESF Report on Lone Parents<sup>1</sup> it states that

*“the task of reviewing policy for lone parents was made all the more difficult by the fact that there is so little statistical data available on them as a target group. This applies equally to the manner in which official statistics both count and describe lone parent households...”*

The Report’s first recommendation states that

“Greater coverage of lone parenthood should be included in the official statistics that are collected regularly including the Census of Population and the Quarterly National Household Survey”.

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<sup>1</sup> Lone Parents, The National Economic and Social Forum Report No. 20, NESF, Dublin, 2001

Without being able to enumerate to extent of these families, neither government nor non-governmental organisations will be able to adequately plan service provision for them. It is essential that this issue is addressed in the next Census.

Given the mission statement of the Central Statistics office

*“the efficient and timely provision of high quality information needed by a changing society”*

it is therefore essential that a way is found of enumerating these families. Even though question 3 regarding relationship to Person 1 has been inserted it has not dealt with the issue. To answer “grandchild” to this question cannot assume that the parent is also living within the household.

It is worth some consideration that the population be enumerated more thoroughly and in a more complex fashion than simply in terms of households. Rather than using Person 1 as a constant by which to capture information on the relationships of the other occupants of the household, we would suggest that information is requested from every person who is enumerated in relation to every other occupant of the household. In this regard we would cite the approach taken by the English Household Form. (See below which shows how each person in the household is related to each other person in the household as per UK census).

There is a wider issue which merits some consideration.

As is well documented the “family” has undergone considerable change over the last number of years from mostly being the traditional two parent family based on marriage to include a myriad of other family types. These include unmarried families, separated and divorced families, same-sex families, non-Irish National families and various other types of families. In addition there are more “obscure” families who have escaped definition and even recognition. For example, how is an unmarried father who is not living with his child described?

The NESF report suggests that a further question be inserted asking  
*“How many children have you parented”*.

This would give very useful information on the number of parents who would live apart from their parents – one important piece of information in documenting the changing nature of the family in Ireland and the policy implications of that.

**Name of Person 1**

First Name
Surname

ENTER NAME OF PERSON 1 ABOVE
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**Name of Person 2**

First Name
Surname

**Relationship of  
person 2 to person  1**

- Husband or wife
- Partner
- Son or daughter
- Brother or sister
- Mother or father
- Step-mother or  
step-father
- Grandchild
- Grandparent
- Other related
- Unrelated

**Name of Person 3**

First Name
Surname

**Relationship of  
person 3 to person  1  2**

- Husband or wife
- Partner
- Son or daughter
- Brother or sister
- Mother or father
- Step-mother or  
step-father
- Grandchild
- Grandparent
- Other related
- Unrelated