

NEWSLETTER - January 2009

Statistics 2007

The Central Statistics Office has published the vital statistics for 2007.

There were 2,464 births to women under 20 in 2007. This represents a slight increase on the 2006 figure which was 2,362 births to women under 20 years. There was also a rise in the teenage fertility rate (the number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19) from 16.6 to 17.5.

In this issue

Vital Statistics 2007

Hidden Fathers – Supporting young single fathers at the margins

Working with Fathers

TPSP News

The age breakdown for 2007 was as follows:

15 and under	64
16	145
17	376
18	644
19	1,022

Of the 2,464 births 67 (9%) were to married parents.

The CSO have begun to collect information on unmarried parents living at the same address. Of the 2,251 births registered to unmarried women, 402 (nearly 18%) were registered as parents living at the same address. There were 213 births to married women under 20.

The numbers of teenagers giving birth has been fluctuating over the past number of years from a high of 3,301 in the year 2000 to a low of 2,362 in 2006. The year 2007 represents the first increase in the number of births to women under 20 in 7 years.

Area of residence of mother

There were 766 births to women under 20 in Dublin city and county, most of which, 344, were in Dublin city. South Dublin had 218 while Fingal had 154. The next highest number of births in Leinster were in Kildare with 131.

Cork city and Limerick city had nearly the same number of births to women under 20, (79 and 80), but given that the population of Cork city is more than twice the size of that of Limerick this means that Limerick had a much higher rate of births to women under 20 than Cork.

However Cork county had 142 births to women under 20 as compared to 46 in Limerick county. This more or less reflects the population of these counties as the population of Cork county is approximately 3 times that of Limerick county. Waterford city had 51 births to women under 20.

Elsewhere Galway city (with 46 births to women under 20) and Galway county (46) had the most births in the Connacht area. Mayo accounted for 55.

In the 3 counties of Ulster Donegal had the highest number of births to women under 20 with 86.

In future this Newsletter will only be available electronically. If you are receiving it by post and would like to receive it by e-mail please forward your e-mail address to info@treoir.ie. Many thanks.

Hidden Fathers – supporting young single fathers at the margins.

This report, published by the PAUL Partnership Limerick in June 2008 with the support of the University of Limerick and Pobal, was undertaken by Kelleher Associates and Pat O'Connor of UL.

The study explores the challenges of fatherhood for young single fathers. Twelve fathers were interviewed as well as a group of single mothers. Organisations providing services to young parents, both statutory and voluntary, were also consulted.

Fourteen of the 16 pregnancies were unplanned pregnancies. However only 3 were the result of a "one-night-stand". In all three of these cases the father had a paternity test. The remaining 13 pregnancies were conceived while the mother and father were "going-out". None were married at the time of the pregnancy.

For these fathers being a good father means being there for the child, taking responsibility and putting the child first. All fathers expressed a commitment to playing a role in their child(ren)'s lives and acknowledged the positive impact becoming a father had on them.

The majority of the young men see women as having the main responsibility for children but all fathers interviewed wished to retain an involvement in the care and rearing of their children. However, this was not without difficulties. Many pointed to the considerable anxiety and fear which men experience in relation to physical caring of children. There was a general consensus that the majority of men need improved skills in caring and household tasks. Many fathers rely on relatives, mainly women, to support them with the care of their child. It was also evident that the men interviewed had few skills when it came to emotional competence.

Six of the 12 young men interviewed had satisfactory access arrangements, none of which involved the courts. In 4 cases the fathers considered their access unsatisfactory, relationships between the parents were "hostile"

and trust between them had broken down. The court was involved in 3 of these 4 cases. In 2 cases the fathers had no access but were seeking access through the courts. Accommodation, distance and finance were cited as obstacles to having quality access.

None of the 12 fathers had formal arrangements for paying maintenance to the mother of their children but made contributions in a variety of ways.

Thirteen of the 16 children had their father's names on the birth certificate. In general men were unsure of the legal implications or advantages of having their names on the birth certificates.

Ten of the 12 men did not plan to become fathers. What came across strongly in the interviews is that the men do not take responsibility for having sex.

The following were some of the difficulties outlined by the fathers in the study:

- The absence of adequate accommodation
- The need for sex education
- Appropriate provision for access to children
- Appropriate access to pre-natal classes
- Legal advice and advocacy on access, paternity and joint custody
- Information on whether or not fathers have a right to have their names on birth certificates
- Legal advice on whether or not single fathers have to be consulted in regard to passports being issued for their children

The purpose of the focus group of young mothers was to elicit their views on the role of young fathers and the difficulties regarding that role from the perspective of mothers.

Reliability and responsibility were key factors in how women define the traits of a good father. However the young women felt that men varied in their willingness to take their responsibility as fathers seriously.

What came across from the group is that women feel that many men have a romantic and unrealistic view of what it is to be a father. They only "step-up" to be fathers when they make a commitment to get married.

The mothers suggested that while some of the fathers of their children take responsibility for their children but few of them have the skills to care for them.

There was disagreement among the mothers in regard to whether or not the father of the child should have his name on the birth certificate. Difficulties arose regarding passports and applications for One-Parent Family Payment. There was some uncertainty among the group as to the precise legal implications of having the father's name on the birth certificate.

Poverty was a key issue in the lives of the mothers interviewed. Rearing a child on One-Parent Family Payment is a major challenge. In regard to maintenance, the mothers agreed that arrangements regarding maintenance were best kept informal. Payments in kind can be of enormous importance. The mothers felt that despite the hardships, having One-Parent Family payment gave them some independence from the fathers so the fear of having money deducted if the father paid maintenance was very real.

All the mothers participating in the focus group felt that children should know the identity of their fathers and they should have access unless there are serious difficulties such as domestic violence. In such circumstances there should be supervised access. They acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to get an appropriate place for supervised access.

Childlink - the Journal of Barnardos' National Resource Centre has a special edition on *Working with Fathers*. Contents include *Working with Fathers: messages from research into good practice* by Harry Ferguson and Fergus Hogan; *Dad Talk - working with fathers* by Catherine Byrne and Martin Grogan on how to encourage dads in communicating with their children; *Fathers - the missing link* by Tim Kahn which describes the story so far of *Involving Fathers in Early Years Settings*; *The Da Project* by Finola Halligan and Francis Chance; *Kick Start: going where no other training course has been before* by David Simpson and *Young fathers and work-life balance* by Simon Forrest. Available from Barnardos Training and Resource Service, (01) 454 9699, (01) 4530355, see www.barnardos.ie €3 + €1.50 p+p.

Key issues raised by organisations consulted:

1. The invisibility of young single fathers
2. Mainstream programmes which do not integrate parenting, sexual health and relationship programmes within their own work on recreation, crime diversion, and education and training.
3. The need for specialised teachers / trainers in schools to teach relationship and sexual health education.

The way forward:

Given the invisibility of young fathers due to the fact that they are not counted in the Census, are often invisible in other official figures (e.g. One-Parent Family Payment) and are generally not included as target groups in projects, young fathers can be forgotten and very hard to reach.

The main recommendation arising from the study is that the PAUL Partnership should take a lead role in establishing a project to specifically target young dads to engage and support them. The project should be based in an informal setting and funded by a cross-departmental budget. Young dads need support to develop self-confidence, encouragement to up-skill and support to acknowledge a sense of achievement. The key to the success of the project is the methodology of the work and the building of relationships between the worker and the young fathers. Service providers should deliver information on their services, education/training programmes, rights and entitlements of young single fathers in the project.

Launch of the Finglas Teen Parents Support Programme

The Finglas Teen Parents Support Programme was officially launched on Friday 7th November 2007 in St. Michael's Secondary School Wellmount Road, by Barry Andrews T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. In his address Minister Andrews emphasised the importance of having a Programme such as the TPSP which young people are comfortable about approaching. He said that it was obvious from the number of young parents in Finglas who contact the TPSP directly that the staff were making an impression on young parents in the area and that the community generally was aware of the quality of their work. He complimented the TPSP staff on the importance they give to including young fathers in the project. Minister Andrews stated ' speaking as a new father myself, one day you feel that you are the best parent in the world and the next you can feel like the worst'. The Minister added 'parenthood can be a rollercoaster difficult enough for anyone but can be extremely challenging for a teenager coping with all the usual stresses of being a teen'. The Finglas TPSP is managed by Parents Alone Support Service, Finglas and covers all of the Finglas area. For further information contact Rebecca Moore TPSP Project Leader, Tel 8641989 or 087-9523924



Rebecca Moore, TPSP Project Leader, Noreen Murphy General Manager, HSE Local Health Office and Barry Andrews, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Comings and Goings

Congratulations to Joanne Murphy, Project Leader, Louth TPSP on the birth of her son Matthew and to Claire Frisby, Project Worker for the Carlow/Kilkenny TPSP on the birth of her son Robert. Sandra McGlynn has moved from the Dublin West TPSP to another post in Barnardos.

Melanie Callaghan has taken over Sandra's post and Serena Holmes has started as Project Worker with the Limerick TPSP. We would like to wish Sandra, Melanie and Serena every success in their new positions.

Margaret Morris, National Co-ordinator TPSP
Tel 6700 167 tpsp@treoir.ie