

Press Release

3rd July 2014-07-03

Don't penalise the poorest families

The Growing Up In Ireland (GUI) study commissioned by Treoir, the National Information Service for Unmarried Parents, confirms much of what we know about solo parents – they generally have low levels of education, are poor, are ten times more likely than married parents to be welfare dependent, are less likely to be working and fare worse on all deprivation measures compared to other families. Thirty six percent of solo parents did not work at all before the birth of their children.

The policy of the Department of Social Protection, from July 2015, is to withdraw the One Parent Family Payment (OFP) from lone parents when their youngest child reaches 7 and for them to seek Jobseekers Payment. Margaret Dromey, Treoir CEO, said *“It is difficult to understand an ‘activation policy’ which results in a lone parent who is working and receiving some support in the form of OFP and FIS being significantly worse off as a result of the policy. Lone parents need to be supported in every way to avail of education and training. Thankfully those who are not in employment and transitioning from One Parent Family Payment to Jobseekers will not lose out financially”* *.

At the Department of Social Protection's pre budget forum in Dublin Castle on 4th July, Treoir recommended that at a minimum

- Solo parents in receipt of One Parent Family Payment should be fully supported with training allowances to partake in suitable education and training which will enable them to enter the labour market at a level which will enable them to support themselves and their children
- The Department of Social Protection should re-instate the earnings disregard for solo parents to encourage them to take up part-time employment while in receipt of One Parent Family Payment. This would incentivise employment well before the youngest child reaches seven (the age at which One Parent Family Payment will be no longer available).
- It is essential that an adequate amount of affordable, quality childcare, with preference given to solo parents returning to work be made available
- Social Welfare Payments and the associated “secondary” payments should not be cut or reduced in any way in budget 2015.

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- A lone parent with net earnings of €300 per week, gets One Parent Family Payment of €120.30 and FIS of €51.42 and has a total income of **€471.72**

As a result of the Department's 'activation policy' the parent will be **€48.12** per week less well off.

- The new situation will be as follows: net earnings of €300, FIS = €123.60 and NO One Parent Family Payment. Total €423.60

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Notes to Editor:

About Treoir

Treoir is the Irish word for direction and guidance.

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

Births outside marriage Ireland – The statistics

There were 25,344 births registered as outside marriage in 2012

This accounts for 35% of all births, an increase of 1% on 2011

Almost 56.5% of births outside of marriage were to couples who are living together (cohabiting).

A total of 1,639 teenagers had babies last year, 26 of these were aged under 16.