



information for unmarried parents

Annual Report 2018



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ABOUT TREOIR

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, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children, was founded in 1976 and is a national representative organisation advocating for equal rights for unmarried parents and their children. Its primary role is to provide specialist information and advice to unmarried parents concerning legal, economic and social issues. Central to Treoir's work is ensuring that policy decisions that impact the lives of unmarried families are influenced and informed by the experience of those directly affected.

TREOIR

- Operates a free, confidential National Specialist Information and Referral Service on all aspects of unmarried parenthood, providing accessible 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
- manages the national co-ordination of the Teen Parents Support Programme
- advocates on behalf of unmarried parents and their children.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dr. Ruth Barrington, Chair

Liam Kirwan, Treasurer, Individual

Deirdre Pemberton, Secretary, Hear2help

Thomas Quigley, Bessborough Care Centre

June Tinsely, Barnardos

Marian Barnard, Anew

Ciara McKenna, National Maternity Hospital Holles Street

Patricia O'Donovan Individual

TREOIR MEMBERS

Aislinn	Doras Buí	Mary Immaculate College
Barnardos	Familibase Youth Service	Carr's Child and Family Services
Bessborough Care Centre	Foróige	National Maternity Hospital
Clarecare	Health Service Executive	Rotunda Hospital
Coombe Women & Infants	Here-2-Help	Sligo Social Service Council
University Hospital	Home-Start	St. Anne's Day Nursery
Cúnamh	Limerick Social Services Council	St. Catherine's Community
CURA	Anew	Services

HONORARY MEMBERS

Gemma Rowley Honorary Life Member

STAFF

Damien Peelo, Chief Executive Officer

Margaret Morris, National Co-ordinator, TPSP

Veronica Black, Information & Training Officer

Joanne Hickey, Office Assistant

Samantha Dunne – Information, Membership and Communications Officer – Appointed October 2018

Sharon Kavanagh – Financial and Office Administrator – Appointed October 2018

Mary Roche – Information and Policy Officer – Appointed December 2018

Beatrice Cronin, Information and Policy Officer- Resigned November 2018

Helen Bowe, Administrator – Resigned October 2018

Clare White, Information Officer – Resigned July 2018

MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON



During the past year, Treoir has pressed forward in its mission to support unmarried parents and their children. A highlight was the seminar held on 3rd December to highlight the findings of a research report commissioned by Treoir entitled *An Examination of the Barriers to Shared Parenting Experienced by Unmarried Fathers*. The study was undertaken by Dr Elizabeth Kiely and Robert Bolton of University College Cork. The authors examined the literature on shared parenting and interviewed unmarried fathers about their experience of parenting a child. They found that shared parenting has been given little academic or research attention in Ireland. Research that is available nationally and internationally is concerned with shared parenting after divorce or separation, rather than between unmarried parents.

They suggested a definition of shared parenting ‘as referring to substantive (though not necessarily equal) shared responsibility and care of children by parents and which requires parents to support each other and to work together in the best interests of their child(ren) regardless of the status of their own relationship to each other.’ They found that the research evidence is strong on the benefits of fathers’ involvement in children’s lives. The literature suggests that shared parenting is more likely to happen in higher income rather than low income families and among parents who work out their own parenting relationship rather than have it imposed on them after their intimate relationship ends.

In their interviews with unmarried fathers, the researchers found that the fact that the fathers were not automatic guardians of their child/ren was the most problematic issue in sharing parenting. The lack of information, support and financial resources to assist unmarried fathers to stay involved in their children’s lives in a significant way was also identified by fathers as a key obstacle to sharing parenting. The personal experience of the fathers in trying to be a parent to their child/ren highlight the many problems they face and draw attention the official, professional and cultural biases which assume that fathers are of lesser importance and value as parents than mothers.

The message of this research study, and one endorsed by Treoir and other organisations, is that if we are to put the best interests of the child of unmarried parents first, we need a sea change in our approach to supporting unmarried fathers who wish to share the parenting of their child/ren. We need to change our laws, implement those on the statute book and target resources to this end. A copy of the report is available on Treoir’s website at www.treoir.ie/media/publications/

Treoir is very grateful to the Community Foundation of Ireland whose support made this research possible.

Treoir also adopted a new strategy to guide the organisation in achieving its goals over the next three years. I would like to thank our CEO, Damien Peelo and the staff for their input to the strategy and express the commitment of the Council to play its part in achieving the objectives we have agreed.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to acknowledge the patience, resilience and good humour of our staff during the move to new offices and thank them for their cooperation. The Council was pleased that the move had little or no impact on the services offered to our clients.

I would like to thank the Council of Treoir for their commitment to and engagement with the mission of Treoir. In particular I would like to thank June Tinsley for her services to the Council and to Treoir. During the year, we welcomed Patricia O'Donovan to the Council.

The Council is very grateful to our funders for their continued support in 2018 for the work of Treoir. The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme of the Health Service Executive, Citizens Information Board and Tusla funded our range of activities to support and advocate for unmarried families and their children.

As a membership organisation, Treoir values the contribution members make to our own work and to the shared work we undertake within our different organisations - offering insight, support, guidance and information to families in Ireland. I would like to thank our member organisations for their continued support.

Dr. Ruth Barrington



A NOTE FROM THE CEO

Treoir had another very busy year in 2018. The National Information Service continued to provide expert information and guidance to professionals, unmarried parents and to extended family members. We can see from our data that the number of calls are close to the levels of previous years but the number of queries generated from the calls is higher with over 6,400 queries in 2018. This is continuing a trend and demonstrates that calls are taking longer as they are more complex, with callers requiring information on a number of issues. It is worth noting that the number of calls is almost equal from both mothers and fathers.

The importance of accurate and factual information, provided by telephone, email, face to face and in easily accessible leaflets is critical to ensuring parents keep the needs of their children central in their decision-making, particularly when they are not co-habiting. Traffic to our updated, mobile accessible website remains high as parents seek information on the often complex legal positions of unmarried families.

High levels of usage of the National Information Centre's service is testimony to the quality of the information and guidance provided on a daily basis by the Treoir staff.

The Teen Parents Support Programme continues to deliver a high quality service to young parents across the country.

We were delighted to commission a study into the barriers to shared parenting. University College Cork carried out the research which also examined barriers fathers face to shared parenting and again the issue of automatic guardianship for unmarried fathers was identified as a barrier. We are thankful to the Community Foundation of Ireland for supporting this research.

I was delighted to welcome new staff on board in 2018 and we said farewell to Beatrice Cronin, Clare White and Helen Bowe. I would like to thank them for their work with Treoir and wish them well in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank the Council of Treoir for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. These volunteers often go unnoticed but they carry a significant burden of governance responsibility. As always they carried out their statutory duty with dignity, intelligence and a huge passion for the issues of unmarried families.

Damien Peel

NATIONAL SPECIALIST INFORMATION SERVICE

Treoir will maintain and develop the National Specialist Information Service for unmarried parents of the same or opposite sex, expectant parents, parents living together or apart, their extended families and those working with them.

The National Specialist Information Service continues to be a core part of Treoir's service provision. Treoir promotes the service nationwide through online adverts, social media, our publications, posters in libraries, health centres, community centres, and by word of mouth. The high volume of calls demonstrates the ongoing need for our expert information service by both unmarried families and professionals working in the area.

While the number of calls has slightly dropped in 2018, the queries increased and as in previous years were more complex and time consuming.

Treoir's information team continue to log all calls and the service continues to be a barometer for emerging issues for unmarried families.

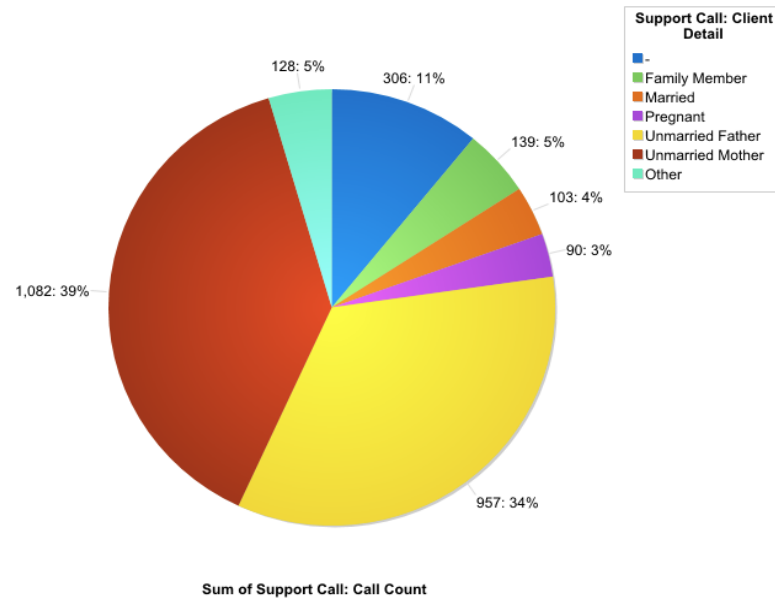
A. CALLS TO THE NATIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE

Treoir National Specialist Information Service dealt with 6,461 queries in 2018 logged against 2,805 Support Calls. Callers often have more than one query on issues such as legal, social welfare and/or shared parenting, hence the difference between the number of enquiries and actual calls.

1. Contact Type

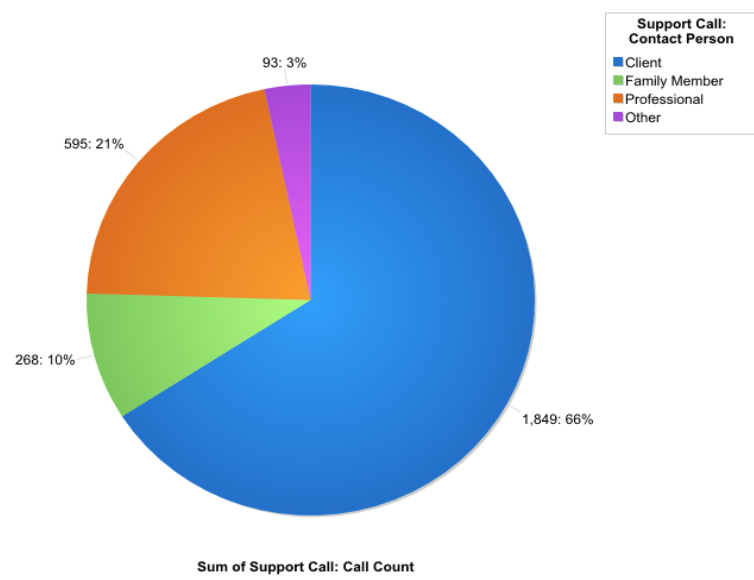
The majority of calls received in 2018 were from the category 'unmarried mothers' i.e., 39% amounting to 1,082 individual calls. This is followed closely by the category 'unmarried fathers' i.e., 34% amounting to 957 individual calls, including repeat callers. Use of the service by professionals made up 21% of calls (595) a slight increase on the previous year. Calls from family members were at 10% (268). The remaining calls concerned expectant parents, LGBT issues and crisis pregnancies.

Fig: 1. Caller Profile



Treoir continues to support a high number of professionals who use the information service for support. Unmarried families lives can be complex and Treoir service continues to provide clarity for professionals who need that support in understanding the nuances of family law, with 21% of all calls coming from professionals. Unmarried parents themselves continue to be the highest users of the service with 66% of calls coming directly from a parent.

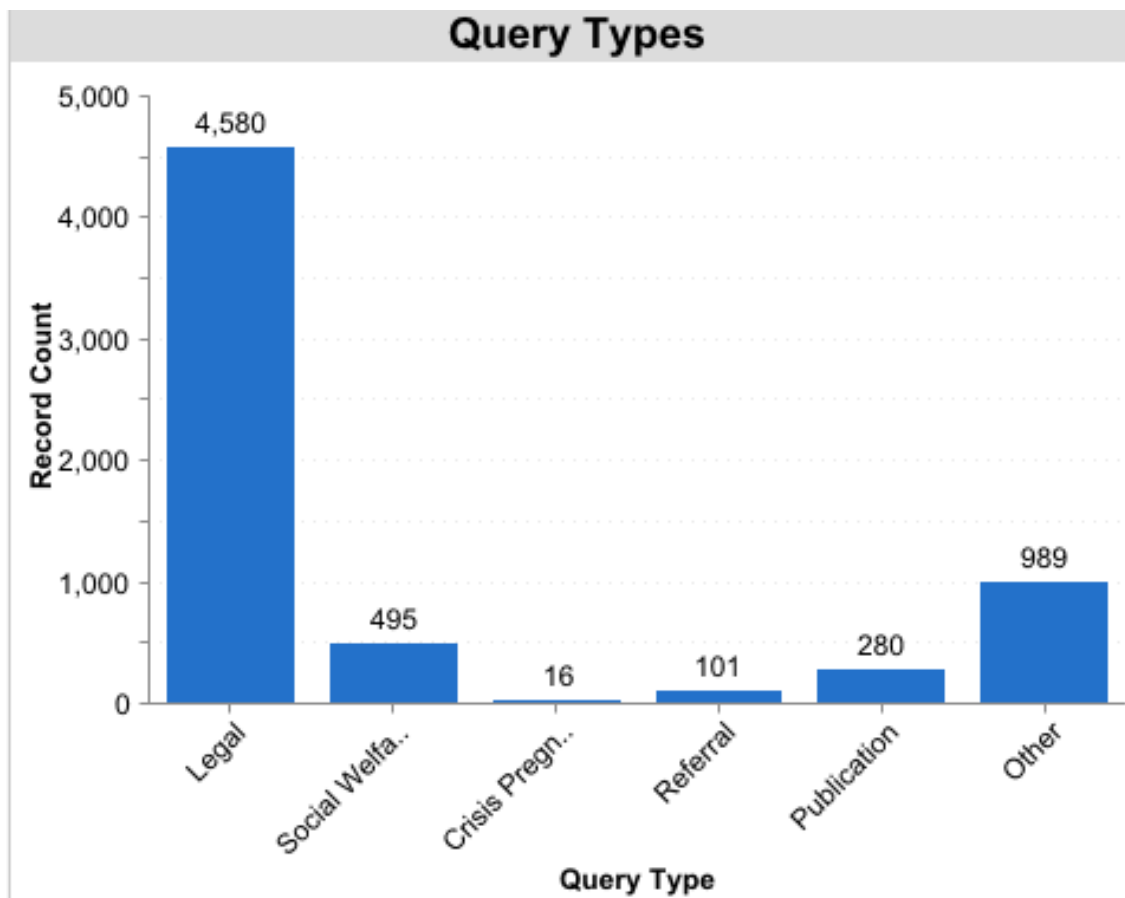
Fig 2: Contact Group:



2. Types of Queries

The majority of queries dealt with in 2018 were categorized as **Legal (71%)**, **Other (15%)**, **Social Welfare (8%)**, and **Publications (4%)** which are summarised in section 3.

Figure 3: Types of Queries



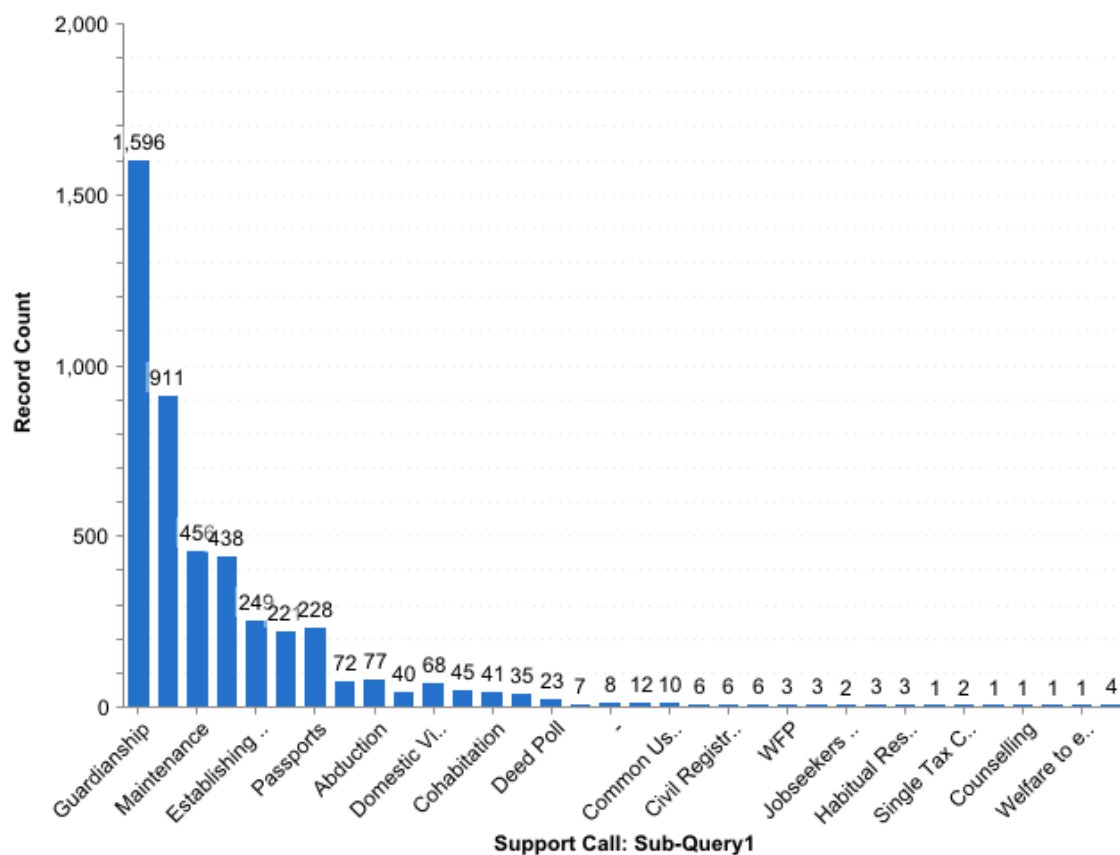
A breakdown of the category other dealt were queries in relation to Parenting (494), and Mediation ((234) with Housing and Counselling the most often made queries in this category.

2.1 Legal Queries

Out of a sample of 4,580 legal queries the most frequent issues dealt with related to **Guardianship 35%** (1,596 queries), **Access 20%** (911 queries), followed by **Maintenance 10%** (456 queries), **Birth Registration 10%** (438queries), **Establishing Paternity 5%** (249 queries) and **Passport 5%** (228 queries).

A smaller number of queries were associated with **Custody 4%** (221 queries), **Abduction 2%** (77 queries), **Adoption 2%** (72 queries), **Domestic Violence 2%** (68 queries), **Shared Parenting 1%** (45 queries), **Cohabitation 1%** (41queries), **One Family Payment 1%** (40 queries), **The Children and Family Relationships Act 0.5%** (35 queries) and **Deed Poll 0.5%** (23 queries).

Fig 4: Legal Queries



Guardianship continues to be the most frequent query under the Legal category with queries coming from both parents. As unmarried fathers do not have automatic guardianship of their children, unlike married fathers, there is an ongoing need for information to parents. There are three different means under Irish law by which an unmarried father can acquire guardianship which may explain the frequency of the queries on this issue.

Feedback from the Information Service suggests callers are not always aware of the specific rights and duties related to guardianship, that it is not automatic, how it differs from custody and is not linked to maintenance.

Treoir continued to advocate for a Register of Guardianship during 2018 and for automatic guardianship rights for unmarried fathers.

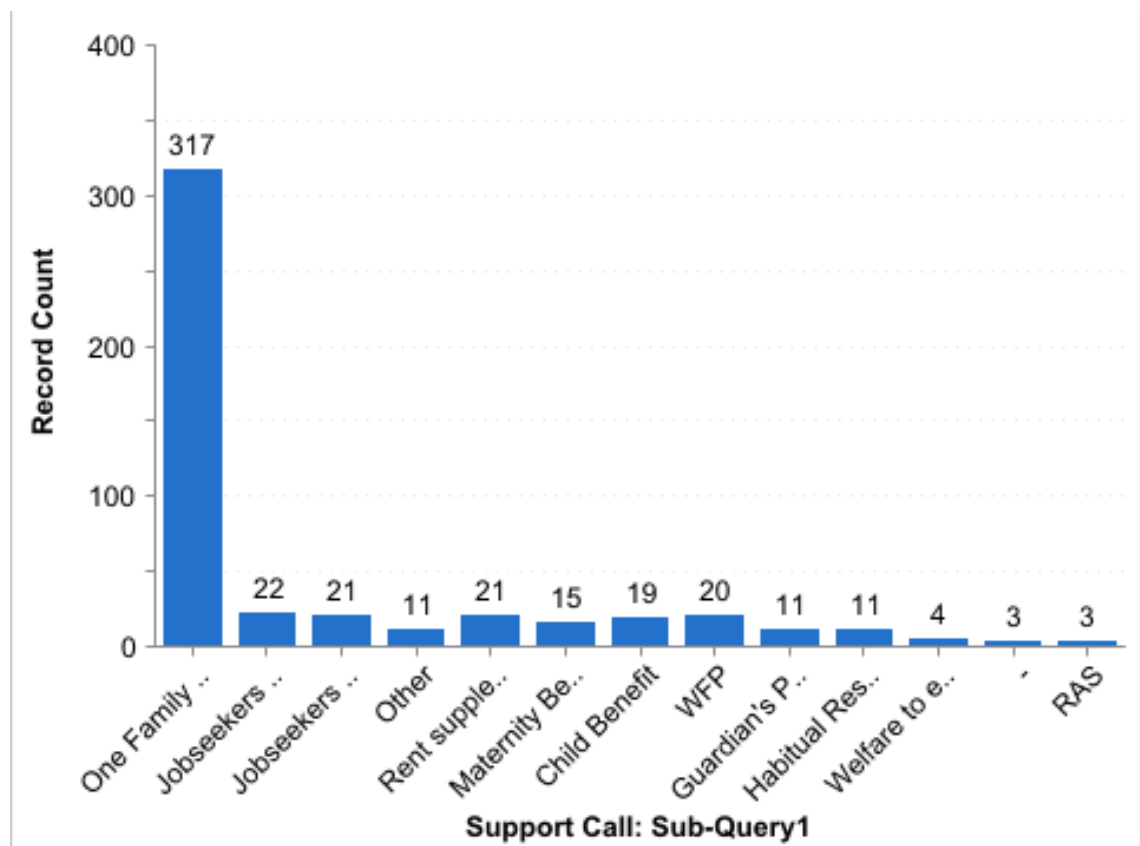
2.2. Social Welfare Queries

Please note that some Support Calls may have as many as 7 associated queries.

Social Welfare queries made up 9% of all calls to the Treoir Specialist Information Service in 2018.

The breakdown of the queries is as follows: **One Parent Family Payment 64%** (317 queries), **Jobseekers Allowance and Jobseekers Transitional Payments 9%** (43 queries) and **Rent Supplement 4%** (21 queries).

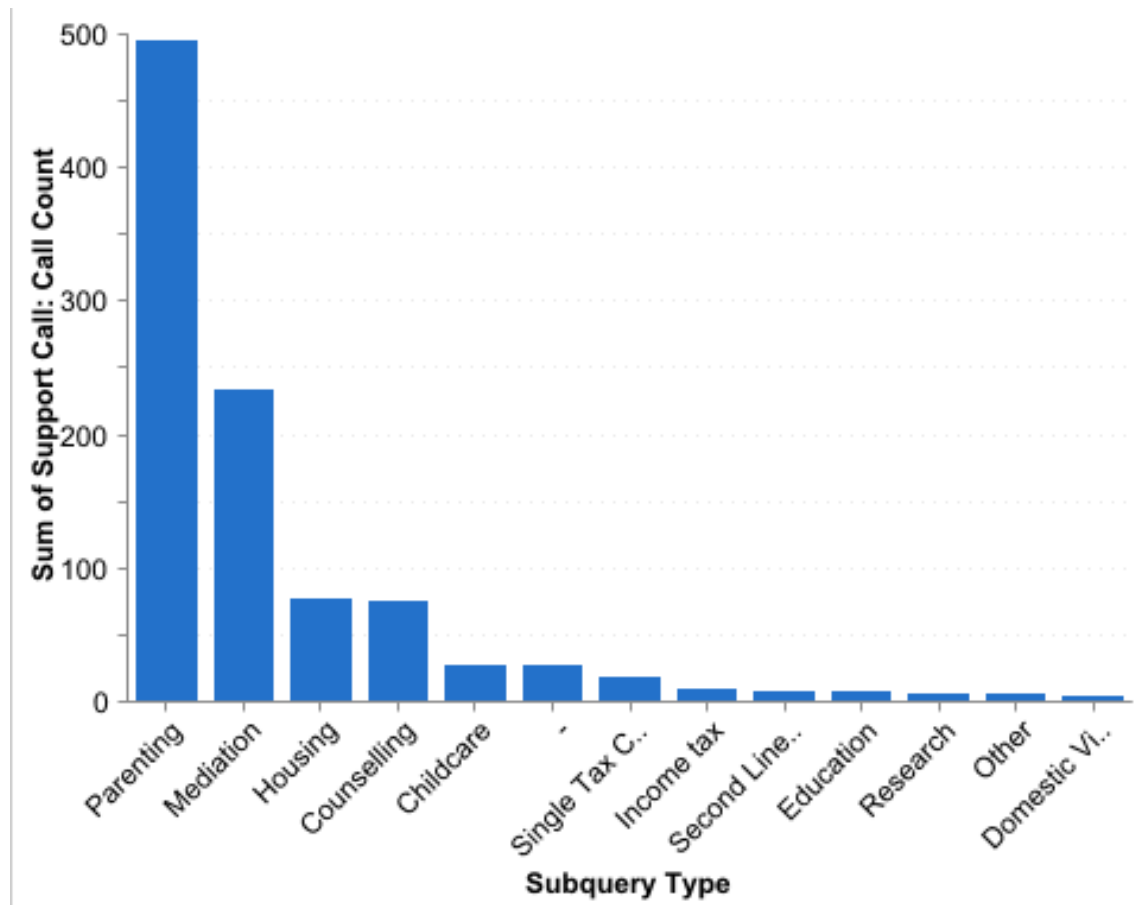
Fig. 5 Social Welfare query type:



2.3. Other Queries

Fifteen percent of all calls fall into the other category. Within this category **Shared Parenting** was the most frequently reported issue after legal queries. Out of a sample of 989 queries, 50% of queries related to **Shared Parenting**, followed by **Mediation** at 23% of the queries.

Fig. 6 Other queries:



3. Method of contact

The vast majority of contact is by telephone with 82% of all queries (5,282 queries) handled by Treoir's phone Information Service. 11% of contact was handled by email (717 email queries).

The remaining 7% of contact is made up of people who called in person to Treoir's office, or contacted us by letter or through social media.

<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: - (240 records)	153	239	1,625
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Telephone (5,282 records)	2,141	5,196	4,656
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Email (717 records)	365	719	3,454
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Letter (4 records)	3	4	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Person (79 records)	24	72	0
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Order Form (79 records)	75	79	2,962
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Other (39 records)	36	39	2,187
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Call: Queries made by: Facebook (21 records)	8	19	0
Grand Totals (6,461 records)	2,805	6,367	14,885

4. Case Studies

The following cases illustrate the nature of the queries dealt with by Treoir's National Specialist Information Service. The lived experiences of the callers demonstrate the complexity and multifaceted nature of the queries dealt with. In addition, the case studies illustrate the skills and knowledge required to provide relevant information and to deal with personal and sensitive circumstances.

CASE STUDY NO. 1

Single Person Child Carer Credit (SPCCC) – Relinquishing claim to SPCCC

The mother of a young child contacted Treoir regarding the Single Person Child Carer Credit (SPCCC). She is getting One-Parent Family Payment from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. She is not working. The father of the child is working and she was enquiring if it was possible for him to claim the SPCCC. The child stays with the father for two nights each week.

To qualify for SPCCC you must be a single person with a qualifying child. Only one parent or guardian of a child can claim the SPCCC in a tax year. If you are the primary claimant you can claim SPCCC. A secondary claimant may claim SPCCC if the primary claimant has relinquished or given up her claim to the credit.

To be a secondary claimant your child must be living with you for at least 100 days in the year. The 100 days do not have to be consecutive. The greater part of a day is counted as a day. For example, if the child stays from Saturday morning until Sunday evening this will be counted as two days. As a secondary claimant you can only claim SPCCC if there is a primary claimant for your child.

In this situation the mother was the primary claimant. As she did not have sufficient taxable income to use the credit fully she could choose to give up or relinquish her claim to the tax credit. The father, the secondary claimant, could then claim the credit. To give up the tax credit the mother must complete the Form SPCC1 which is available from the local tax office. The secondary claimant, the father must then claim the SPCCC. The claim is done with the Form SPCC2.

The mother was concerned that giving up the tax credit to the father would affect her eligibility for One-Parent Family Payment (OFP). She had been informed by an organisation she had contacted, regarding her query, that if the child stays with the father for two nights she would lose her OFP because he had joint custody of the child. I informed the caller that OFP is not payable if the parents of a child have joint equal custody of a child. I referred her to the website of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection where this is stated very clearly. I informed her that joint custody is not the same as joint and equal custody. She had the main care of the child and was entitled to claim OFP

The mother may claim SPCCC again at a later date if she is still a qualifying primary claimant e.g. she hasn't married or is in a cohabitating relationship. When she withdraws her surrender of the SPCCC, the tax credit will be restored at the beginning of the tax year following the withdrawal.

The value of the tax credit is €1,650 per year. This will reduce the tax the parent pays by €31.73 per week.

The Single Person Child Carer Credit came into effect on 1 January 2014. It replaced the One-Parent Family Tax Credit which was available to both parents if they qualified for the credit. The abolition of this tax credit had a very negative effect on the financial situation of fathers who had qualified for the One-Parent Family Tax Credit. The SPCCC can only be claimed by one parent. The father where he is the secondary claimant can only apply for the tax credit (where it is not being claimed) if the mother is willing to relinquish the claim to the credit. In this case the mother agreed to relinquish her claim to the SPCCC as she did not have sufficient taxable income to use the credit fully. This was a good example of 'shared parenting' and parents co-operating with each other.

The replacement of the One-Parent Family Tax Credit by the Single Person Child Carer Credit may not encourage shared parenting when the credit can only be claimed by one parent and where the secondary claimant is dependent on the mother to relinquish the claim where she is not claiming the credit.

Treoir in last year's pre-budget submission to the Department of Finance made the following recommendations.

Extend the Single Person Child Carer Credit to both parents who live separately to support shared parenting If this is not possible, then make the Single Person Child Carer Credit available automatically to the qualifying secondary claimant when the primary claimant does not claim it.

CASE STUDY NO. 2

Parental Leave - Entitlement to Parental Leave

Caller was enquiring if she was eligible for Parental Leave. Her wife had a one year old child. Caller's name was not on the child's birth certificate as the legislation has not commenced which would allow her to be entered on the Register of Births as a Parent of the child. She had applied for and been granted Paternity Benefit.

Paternity Benefit can be claimed by the spouse, cohabitant or civil partner of the mother, regardless of gender.

The Parental Leave Act 1998 as amended by the Parental Leave (Amendment Act) 2006 entitles each parent to 18 weeks of unpaid leave. The leave must be taken before the child is 8 years of age.

I contacted the Workplace Relations Commission regarding her query and they confirmed that she would be eligible to apply for Parental Leave.

CASE STUDY NO. 3

TEMPORARY GUARDIANSHIP AND TESTAMENTARY GUARDIANSHIP

A single mother was enquiring if it was possible for a family member to get guardianship of her child. She was concerned that if she became ill or died they would not have any legal rights to the child. Treoir gave the caller information on Temporary Guardianship and Testamentary Guardianship.

TEMPORARY GUARDIANSHIP

The Children and Family Relations Act 2015 enables a qualifying guardian to nominate a person to act as a guardian in the event of the qualifying guardian becoming incapable of exercising the rights and responsibilities of guardianship through serious illness or injury.

A qualifying guardian, in relation to a child, means a person who is a guardian of the child and who:

Is a parent of the child and has custody of him or her or, not being a parent of the child has custody of him or her to the exclusion of any living parent of the child.

The nominated form (No.58.32) can be downloaded from the Treoir website. The nomination must be made in writing and can specify the rights and responsibilities that the nominated person can exercise. The nominated person can apply to the court to act as a guardian if the qualifying guardian is subsequently incapacitated. Each guardian, parent and Tusla will be informed of such an application. The decision of the court will be made in the best interests of the child and the court may take the views of the child into account where possible given the child's age and understanding.

TESTAMENTARY GUARDIANSHIP – GUARDIANSHIP AND WILLS

All parents who are guardians and other guardians, not being parents of the child, who have custody (day-to-day care) of a child should make a Will appointing a guardian to act on their behalf in the event of their death before the child is 18. This is especially important if a parent/guardian is a sole guardian. This is called testamentary guardianship

CASE STUDY NO. 4

CONSENT OF GUARDIANS FOR THE CHILD'S PASSPORT

Affidavit to be sworn by the sole guardian of the child (AFF1) – Passport Service 2017

Affidavit to be sworn by father or a mother who claims to be the sole guardian of the child (AFF1) – Passport Service 2013

Where a child has two guardians the consent of both guardians is required before a passport can be issued by the Passport Service. The signature of each guardian is required on the Passport Application Form (APS 1E). Only the mother is required to sign the Passport Application Form if she is the sole guardian. This applies even if the father's name is on the child's birth certificate.

Where a person is the sole guardian s/he has to complete a Sole Guardian Affidavit form (AFF1) in the presence of a solicitor or a Commissioner for Oaths. The affidavit must be submitted to the Passport Service along with the Passport Application Form (APS1E) and the child's birth certificate. This applies to both first time applications and renewals.

The caller was renewing her child's passport. She is the sole guardian of her child. The father has an informal access arrangement with the mother. He sees the child irregularly. The mother downloaded the Sole Guardian Affidavit form. This Affidavit was different to the affidavit she had completed for the child's previous passport. On 18th January 2016, certain provisions of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 came into effect. The AFF1 form was changed to reflect these provisions.

She was concerned regarding the reference to Parental Responsibility in the new affidavit e.g. I say that no other person is a guardian, or has rights and responsibilities equivalent to guardianship over the said child, or has parental responsibility in relation to the said child by operation of law.

The wording of the previous affidavit made no reference to parental responsibility e.g. I say that no other person is a guardian by operation of law.

She was confused by the reference to parental responsibility and was unsure if it meant that the father's consent was required because as a parent he had responsibility for the child as he had informal access to the child.

We clarified that the father was not a guardian of the child and therefore his consent was not required for the passport.

I informed her that under the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, the rights and responsibilities equivalent to guardianship e.g. parental responsibility obtained in certain other jurisdictions are recognised in this state. For example where a child is born in Northern Ireland an unmarried father has parental responsibility if he is named on the child's birth certificate. Parental Responsibility is the equivalent of guardianship. Someone with parental responsibility for a child must consent for an Irish passport for the child.

She had contacted her local court regarding the situation and she was asked if the father's name was on the child's birth certificate. When she confirmed that it was she was informed that she required his consent for the passport and that she should also have received his consent for the previous passport.

It is a cause of concern that court staff do not know that only the mother is required to sign the Passport Application Form if she is the sole guardian and that this applies even if the father's name is on the child's birth certificate where the child is born in the Republic of Ireland.

B. PUBLICATIONS

1. Information Pack for Unmarried Parents

The information pack for unmarried parents was updated in 2018. This pack is Treoir's principal publication and is updated every year. It is funded by the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme. The Pack contains essential information for unmarried parents, their families and for those working with unmarried parents. It includes information on access, custody, guardianship, crisis pregnancy, money during pregnancy and financial information following birth, child abduction, domestic violence etc.

Multiple copies were distributed to maternity hospitals, Citizens Information Centres, Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Agencies, Family Court Services and other outlets. The pack is sent on request and is available to view and download from the Treoir website, www.treoir.ie. The Pack continues to be a hugely popular resource for both unmarried families and for professionals & NGOs working with unmarried families.

2. Information Leaflets

A great deal of work was undertaken updating Treoir information leaflets which explains in detail the radical changes to family law introduced in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015.

The following is a list of Treoir's most popular leaflets:

- **Guardianship**
- **Access and Custody**
- **Maintenance**
- **Unmarried Fathers**
- **Passports**
- **Cohabiting Parents**
- **Establishing Paternity**
- **International Child Abduction**
- **Step-Parent Adoption**

The leaflets give in depth information on legal issues addressed in the information pack. The leaflets were widely distributed and multiple copies sent to all Citizens Information Centres, Citizens Information Services, Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Agencies and all maternity hospitals. They are available to view and download from the Treoir website www.treoir.ie. At the end of 2018 we began updating some of our leaflets to reflect legislative changes and new social welfare rates. These will be made available when fully completed.

C. WEBSITE

Our new look, mobile responsive website went live in the first quarter of 2018. The new format makes it even easier for people to find the information they want more quickly.

Treoir's website is informative, factual and up to date with information for unmarried families. Treoir maintains the website to ensure that it remains accessible and easy to navigate. Our research shows that people are spending more time on the website over the past years with more people seeking to use the website as the first port of call for information.

There were over 23,000 page hits in the nine months since the website was relaunched at end of March 2018.

More than 4,500 fathers visited the website with the most frequent pages visited being Access, Custody, Guardianship, Cohabiting parents and maintenance.

Just over 3,900 mothers visited the website. The most popular pages frequented by mothers were Fathers, Guardianship, registration and passports.

Fig 8: Gender breakdown

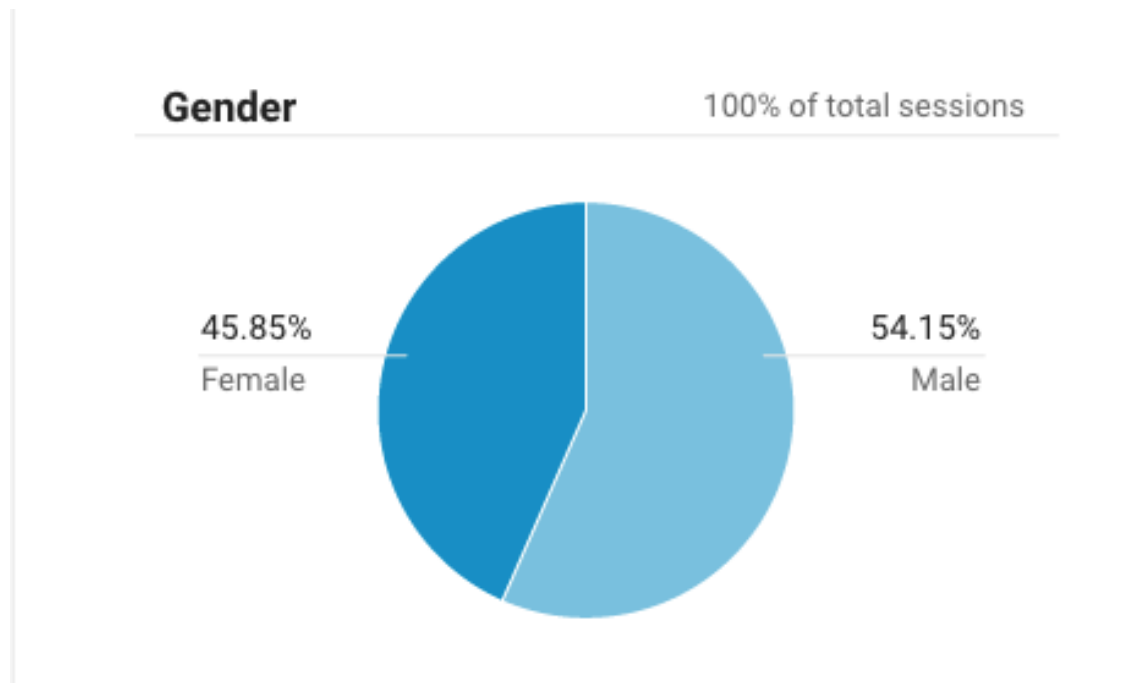
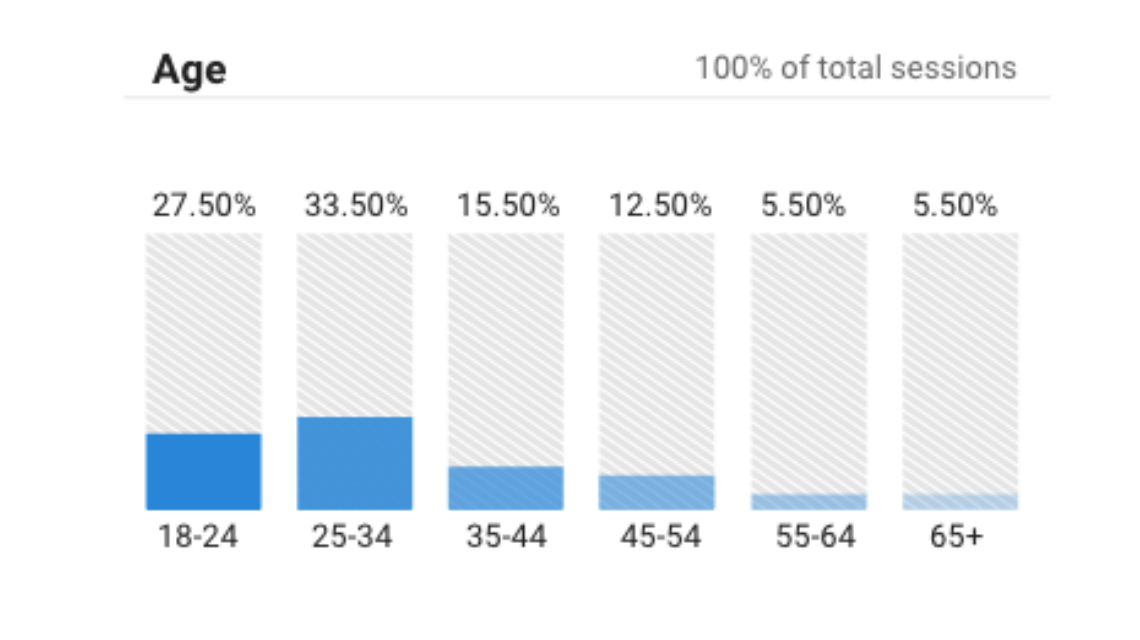


Fig 9: Age demographic



D. OUTREACH

Treoir provides outreach information workshops to groups of unmarried parents and to professionals who provide services to unmarried parents.

The aim of the workshops is to provide accurate and up-to-date information on matters of relevance to parents and their children. Topics covered include:

- the legal rights and responsibilities of parents who are not married to each other (such as guardianship, access, custody, birth registration, cohabitation, passports etc.)
- social welfare allowances, employment and training/education opportunities which are available to parents
- shared parenting and explaining family relationships to children.

Workshops are tailored to respond to the needs of individual groups.

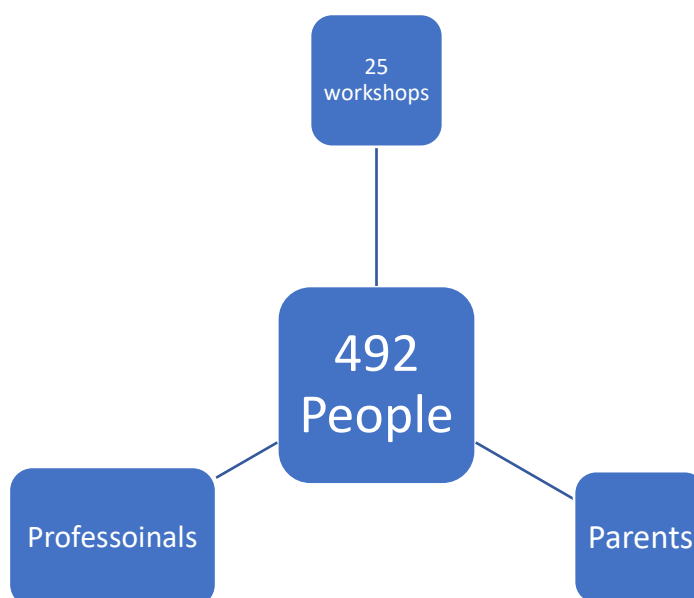
In 2018 Treoir provided 25 outreach information workshops to groups throughout the country. Workshops took place in Cork, Dublin, Fermoy, Limerick, New Ross, Thurles and Waterford.

Four hundred and ninety two people attended the workshops.

Eight workshops were delivered to parents/grandparents in a variety of settings, including:

- an accommodation centre for expectant and single parents,
- a community based rehabilitation day-programme for people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction,
- a project for young mothers living in Direct Provision,
- a Family Support Network which offers support to family members living with drug use
- a group of foster parents
- New Ross public library

Fig 10: Outreach



Treoir delivered seventeen workshops to workers and volunteers who provide services to unmarried parents and their extended families. The workshops were attended by Hospital Social Workers, Crisis Pregnancy Counsellors, Home School Community Liaison Officers,

HSE and TUSLA Social Workers, Workers from Community and Youth Work Services, Citizens Information Centres, Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, Family Resource Centres, Support Services for Parents experiencing Domestic violence.

Treoir provided three workshops to the Irish Association of Social Workers. The Association advertised two workshops to their members. *“We have had huge interest in our seminar with both now booked out”.* - **Professional Development Co-ordinator, IASW**

At their request, Treoir agreed to host a third workshop to respond to the demand for places. The workshops were attended by social workers who provide services in a range of settings – mental health, disability, fostering, adoption, children’s hospital, hospice services, primary care etc.

Participants at all Treoir workshops are made aware of all the services provided by Treoir including its publications, its role in advocating for the rights of unmarried parents and the National Information Service. Treoir’s policy and advocacy work may be informed by and reflect the issues identified by participants in the workshops.

Feedback From Workshop Participants

Thank you so much for giving up your spare time to deliver such an excellent presentation! The feedback on the evaluation forms was very positive. **FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres)**

Thank you very much again for the very informative training you gave us last week.
Staff and volunteers in CIC

Thank you both so much for a fantastic session. The participants got so much out of it and found it very worthwhile.
Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service Provider

Thank you so much for giving up your time to deliver such an excellent presentation! The feedback on the evaluation forms was very positive. **FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres)**

A quick email to thank you for your wonderful and hugely informative input at our meeting yesterday! The women so appreciated the information but also the kind and respectful way you held their attention, drew them back to the matters at hand when everyone started talking at once, and took the time to answer each question.
Coordinator - Project for young mothers living in Direct Provision

POLICY DEVELOPMENT / RESEARCH

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

POLICY

Treoir advocated on behalf of unmarried parents and their children in 2018. We did this by influencing legislation, developing policy programmes informed by queries from Treoir's National Specialist Information Service and working to promote the rights of children to have a relationship with both parents where possible.

Treoir principles:

- 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 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- believes that all children have a right to know, be loved and cared for by both parents*

*where possible and where no risk is identified with regard to the child's welfare as a result of contact with a parent.

Department of Education & Skills

The Department of Education and Skills published the report on "*An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education and to Examine Measures to Increase Participation*" in August 2017.

It was recommended that a cross Departmental group be established to respond to the recommendations of the review. Treoir has participated in this group during 2018.

Treoir highlighted a significant barrier for some lone parents when applying to universities that operate an 'access to education' programme. In many universities mature students must successfully complete the access programme to enter full-time third level courses. Such Access programmes are not assessed under the national accreditation framework, which means lone parents cannot access SUSI grants or other financial supports during the access programme which may operate on a full-time or on a part-time basis. The major barriers lone parents face when entering full-time or part-time education are financial and access to affordable childcare. Treoir recommended that lone parents be given access to supports when undertaking 'required' access programmes to support greater participation in third level.

RESEARCH

Treoir commissioned research into the barriers to shared parenting for unmarried fathers. This was funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland and carried out by University College Cork.

The report "**Unmarried Fathers in Ireland: An Examination of the Barriers to Shared Parenting**" explored the barriers to unmarried fathers involvement in the

sharing of parenting and how shared parenting between unmarried parents can be supported and sustained when it is assessed as being in the best interests of children.

The research shows;

In Ireland unmarried fathers are not recognised by law as automatic guardians unlike their married counterparts. For the unmarried fathers interviewed, this emerged as the single most important problematic issue where sharing parenting is concerned.

The lack of information, support and financial resources to assist unmarried fathers to stay involved in their children's lives in a significant way, was also identified by fathers interviewed as a key obstacle to them sharing parenting.

There is a lack of accessible community based supports (e.g. shared parenting programmes, child parent contact programmes, practical assistance with parenting plans and family maintenance) for unmarried families to help them share parenting in Ireland.

The secondary research and the interview data points to the existence of official, professional and cultural biases, which serve to construct fathers as being of lesser importance and value as parents than mothers, where children are concerned.

The research shows that there is scope for the development of a stronger legislative, policy and practice infrastructure in Ireland, which is conducive to the normalisation of shared parenting arrangements in unmarried families.

The research aims to inform national discourse and policy direction on Unmarried Fathers and Shared Parenting in Ireland.

The full report is available on Treoir's website: <https://www.treoir.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Unmarried-Fathers-in-Ireland-An-Examination-of-the-Barriers-to-Shared-Parenting-1.pdf> and an executive summary is available on request from Treoir.

The report was launched by Deputy Ann Rabbitte TD, a member of the Dail's Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs, at a stakeholders event in the Law Society in December 2018.

Dr. Elizabeth Kiely presented the research findings with her colleague Dr. Robert Bolton.

Two parents spoke about their experiences of shared parenting and the challenges and rewards for them and their children. Peter O'Toole, a father, engaged in shared parenting with his daughter since her birth and Samantha Dunne a mother of a young son spoke of her desire to have her son's father involved and why she passionately believes in shared parenting.



Deputy Anne Rabbitte TD launched the report

Selection of photos from the launch of the research report at the Law Society of Ireland
“Unmarried Fathers in Ireland: An Examination of the Barriers to Shared Parenting”



TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Treoir will support those working with young parents in Ireland

TPSP COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

During 2018, Treoir achieved this Strategic Objective mainly through the post of National Coordinator of the Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) which is based in Treoir. The main purpose of this post is to provide a central focal point for the promotion of the work of the TPSP and the enhancement of the lives of all young parents including those living outside areas covered by a TPSP.

The TPSP consists of eleven separate projects located throughout the country in a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations. The projects, which are funded by Tusla and the HSE, work with young people who become parents when they are aged 19 years or under and, where needed, support them until their children are 2 years of age. The TPSP provides mainly early interventions which enhance and support the wellbeing of young parents and their children, empower young parents in their parenting role and ensure equality of opportunity for parent and child. Young parents with high welfare needs or who are in the Child Protection system are also supported with specific additional interventions (such as support with parenting skills or independent living) as part of an interagency approach to family support. During 2018, the TPSP supported 820 young parents, their children and families.

During 2018, the National Coordinator continued to support the 11 TPSP projects as well as other professionals working with young parents.

This was achieved mainly through:

- maintaining regular contact with TPSP projects and holding regular meetings of all project staff, project management and the TPSP National Advisory Committee
- keeping TPSP staff informed of changes in government policy and legislation in areas which affect young parents such as education and training, childcare, social welfare, birth registration, guardianship and housing
- maintaining contact with key staff in relevant government departments and State agencies and advocating on behalf of the TPSP and young parents nationally
- collecting, collating and analysing detailed data from the TPSP database in relation to referrals received and supports offered by the TPSP. This is used for the annual TPSP Summary of Work; for reports to Tusla; to explore outcomes and to inform TPSP policies and advocacy
- collaborating with other agencies and initiatives who have interests in common with young parents in areas such as housing, childcare, sexual health and maternity services
- providing training to TPSP staff and other professionals working with young parents
- responding to queries from young parents and those involved with them
- maintaining the TPSP website.

TPSP Meetings

To ensure cohesion and the flow of communication among all strands of the TPSP structure, a separate meeting was organized for the TPSP Employing Organisations and the TPSP National Advisory Committee and two separate meetings were organised for all TPSP staff. The Coordinator followed up issues raised at these meetings such as Childcare, Housing, The School Completion Programme, The Youth Participation Strategy and aspects of the Supplementary Welfare System.

Policy and advocacy

One of the other main ways in which the TPSP supports all young parents in Ireland is through advocating on their behalf. During 2018, the National Coordinator made a Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social Protection (DEASP) and a submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) which is reviewing the delivery of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme in schools. Both of these submissions were informed by the views of TPSP staff.

During 2018 the National Coordinator represented the needs of young parents on Working Groups such as:

- The Coalition to end Youth Homelessness
- A Working Group in relation to NCCA's Review mentioned above
- The HSE's Maternity Services Advisory Group
- The Parenting Network.

The TPSP National Coordinator also advocated for young parents at events such as

- The Tusla Parenting Conference
- An Open Policy Day on Parenting organised by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
- The Pre-budget Forum organised by DEASP
- A Pre-budget Forum of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP)
- The Social Inclusion Forum and
- The launch by the Children's Rights Alliance of "*Home Works – A study on the Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness and Living in Emergency Accommodation*"

In terms of outcomes, in 2018 student mothers in secondary education were included under Section 14 of the Childcare Support Act. This Section permits exceptions to the general rules of the National Childcare Scheme for certain categories of vulnerable children. In practice it means that exceptions may be made regarding the age at which their children may avail of the Scheme, the number of hours of childcare for which they may receive a subvention and the level of that subvention. The inclusion of mothers in second level education under Section 14 is the direct result of a proposal made in 2016 by the TPSP to DCYA and engagement with Senior Officials in the Department in 2017.

Promoting the work of the TPSP and networking with other agencies also ensures that TPSP staff and participants are consulted in major pieces of research to do with their client group such as research entitled *Young Families in the Homeless Crisis* conducted by UCC on behalf of Focus Ireland.

Young Parents and Housing

The current ongoing housing crisis is having a serious effect on the young parents and children supported by the TPSP and TPSP staff are reporting that they are seeing developmental delays in children living in substandard or homeless accommodation.

In 2018, the National Coordinator joined the Irish Coalition to end Youth Homeless. This was to try to ensure that the needs of young people who are also young parents are included in this discussion.

On 6th June 2018 the TPSP conducted a Census which captured all its service users with a serious housing need. The Census used the ETHOS¹ typology used by FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. The findings of this Census were used to inform the Strategy of the Irish Coalition to end Youth Homelessness.

Case Studies developed from the Census were also used in the research on *Young Families in the Homeless Crisis* referred to above.

Reporting to Tusla

In addition to responding to queries on an ongoing basis, in 2018 the National Coordinator provided the Corporate Planning and Corporate Performance Section (CPCP) of Tusla with quarterly updates on the numbers of young parents supported by the TPSP projects.

Training for professionals working with young parents

During 2018, the TPSP organized two workshops targeting professionals working with young parents nationally. The first of these, the *Focus on Fathers* Workshop, built on materials developed previously by the Louth TPSP and funded at that time by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. This workshop was co-facilitated by Veronica Black, Treoir's Information and Training Officer and Finian Murray, Men's Health Development Worker, HSE Dublin North East. To date, 60 non-TPSP workers have completed this training.

In 2018, the TPSP also organized a Workshop based on *The TPSP Toolkit*. The TPSP Toolkit, which was funded by the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, brings together in one resource manual, the knowledge, skills and experience of TPSP staff focusing on what are the distinct needs of teen parents. This was the 12th Toolkit Workshop organised by TPSP bringing to 175 the number of professionals working in non-TPSP areas who have availed of it. These include youth workers, social workers, family support workers, aftercare workers, staff in family resource centres, staff in housing agencies, those working with marginalised groups such as young Traveller mothers and those working in drug addiction services.

Both these Workshops have proved to be a very efficient way of disseminating learning and good practice from the TPSP to staff in areas where there are no specific support services for teen parents. They are also a way in which young parents living in these areas can benefit to some extent from the resources and expertise of the TPSP.

In addition, during 2018 the National Co-ordinator and other TPSP staff gave two separate inputs on the work of the TPSP as part of an Induction Programme for over 200 newly recruited Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinators employed by Tusla.

Training for TPSP staff

Part of the role of the TPSP National Co is to respond to training needs identified by TPSP staff. During 2018, TPSP staff participated in an Antenatal Programme delivered by Archways. The main aim of this Programme is to support attachment in the third trimester of pregnancy. It was particularly relevant to the TPSP because most TPSP service users first engage with the projects while they are still antenatal.

Responding to queries

The Coordinator also acts as a source of information, advice and guidance for professionals working with young parents in areas where there is not a TPSP and directs them to other appropriate services. She also responds to queries from pregnant and parenting teen and their parents/guardians from areas where there is not a TPSP. During 2018 she also delivered an Information Session on teen pregnancy to two separate Leaving Certificate Applied classes.

TPSP Website

The TPSP website (www.tpsp.ie) was updated regularly with items of interest to young parents and those involved with them. In 2018, there were 54,000 pages viewed with the page on fathers the most frequently visited.

RAISING AWARENESS / PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

Awareness through connections

Treoir have a wide membership base of organisations working with unmarried parents and their children. Our communications strategy includes the use of social media in reaching our members, clients and other non-member organisation with various information and updates involving policy development, our services, social welfare entitlements, advertising our specialist phone services and many other items of relevance. Throughout 2018 Treoir has increased its audience through Facebook and Twitter, which has significantly increased our reach.

Treoir plans to extend our social media platform in 2019 by including Instagram and YouTube in responding to the changing demographic, more specifically, reaching younger parents and the organisations working with younger parents and their children.

Communications:

Treoir delivered the daily 'What it says in the papers' to all our subscribers. This important news update gives a quick summary of the important national and regional news stories that relate to parenting, unmarried families, relevant social policy and news items of interest.

E-bulletin

The e-bulletin is a quarterly electronic newsletter that updates our members on the work of Treoir and provides space for members to share information and work reports. Following the commencement of GDPR, Treoir only send the e-bulletin to those who subscribe and indicate their consent to receiving the information. There were five e-bulletins produced and circulated in 2018.

AGM 2018 – Reclaiming Our Values

Treoir was delighted to invite Niall Crowley as our keynote speaker to our AGM in 2018. Niall is the former CEO of the Equality Authority and has now founded the Values Lab. His presentation entitled "Reclaiming Our Values" explored how civil society organisations need to promote and communicate their values in order to achieve the social change they are seeking.

Niall suggested that the challenge would be to engage people with our values of inclusion, participation and social justice. Everybody holds these values but not everybody accords a priority to them. The focus in our work would be a demand for values-led institutions and for values informed policies and policy making processes. A full copy of Niall Crowley's talk is available on our website: <http://www.treoir.ie/2017/06/30/treoir-agm-2017/>

Connecting with our community

Tallaght Health Fair provided an opportunity for community-based organisations to showcase the services and supports they offer and also provides a space in which similar organisations can meet and network. Veronica Black joined the fair to advertise Treoir specialist information services and outreach service in the Fettercairn Community Centre in Tallaght Dublin

GOVERNANCE

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

The Council of Treoir places great value on good governance of the organisation and compliance with all company and charity legislation. Treoir is on the journey to be compliant with the Code of Governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector and continually reviews and updates its processes and procedures in line with good practice. In 2018, Treoir successfully adopted a new constitution at an EGM in 2018 to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Companies Act, 2014 and the Charities Regulatory Authority.

The Council of Treoir have two sub-committees to carry out important functions on its behalf: a **Finance and Audit Sub-Committee** and a **HR Sub-Committee**.

Finance and Audit Committee:

This committee met 3 times during 2018. This Sub-Committee's work included:

- Formulating the 2018 budget
- Reviewing statutory accounts
- Ensuring Treoir is compliant with the Good Governance Code
- Reviewing, updating and developing policies and procedures
- Meeting with external auditor in preparation for audit
- Reviewing Treoir's Risk Management

Membership of this sub-committee are Marian Barnard (Chair), Liam Kirwan, Deirdre Pemberton and Ruth Barrington

HR Sub Committee

This sub-committee met twice before the end of the year. The sub-committee developed its terms of reference and developed a work programme for 2018.

The work of the sub-committee included:

- Review of the staff handbook
- Updating key policies and procedures
- Compliance with the Good Governance Code as it relates to staffing policies.

Membership of this sub-committee are Liam Kirwan, June Tinsley and Ciara McKenna.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Company Registration No. 82321 (Republic of Ireland)

TREOIR THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SERVICES FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

TREOIR THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SERVICES FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

		Restricted Funds 2018 €	Unrestricted Funds 2018 €	Total 2018 €	Total 2017 €
	Notes				
Incoming resources					
Other Income	3	-	20,353	20,353	4,661
Charitable activities	3	395,910	34,400	430,310	420,908
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total incoming resources		395,910	54,753	450,663	425,569
Resources expended					
Raising funds		-	-	-	-
Charitable activities	4	(381,749)	(44,340)	(426,089)	(464,661)
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total resources expended		(381,749)	(44,340)	(426,089)	(464,661)
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net surplus / (deficit) for the financial year	5	14,161	10,413	24,574	(39,092)
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

The Income and Expenditure Account has been prepared on the basis that all operations are continuing operations.

**TREOIR THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SERVICES FOR UNMARRIED
PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE**

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2018

	Notes	2018 €	€	2017 €	€
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	7		3,526		2,467
Tangible assets	8		14,772		3,875
			<hr/>		<hr/>
			18,298		6,342
Current assets					
Debtors	10	17,968		1,115	
Cash at bank and in hand		95,628		95,256	
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
		113,596		96,371	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(53,889)		(49,282)	
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
Net current assets			59,707		47,089
			<hr/>		<hr/>
Total assets less current liabilities			78,005		53,431
			<hr/>		<hr/>
Reserves					
Restricted funds	15	5,834		(8,327)	
Unrestricted funds	15	72,171		61,758	
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
Members' funds			78,005		53,431
			<hr/>		<hr/>

The financial statements were approved by the board of directors and authorised for issue on and are signed on its behalf by:

.....
Ruth Barrington
Director

.....
Deirdre Pemberton
Director

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the HSE, HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, TUSLA and the Citizens Information Board without whose financial support the organisation would not exist.

We thank Niall Crowley for addressing our AGM and Conference in 2018 for comprehensive presentation on organisation values.

Staff of various government departments have kindly given of their time to Treoir either through making presentations or discussing policy issues.

Rosemary Grant continues to chair the National Advisory Committee of the Teen Parents Support Programme with great enthusiasm. We thank her sincerely for the contribution she makes in that role.



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Treoir is a company limited by guarantee; company number 823231, Charity number; CHY 8877. Treoir is also registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority; Charity Registration Number: 20022211

