



Informing  
Unmarried  
Parents

# Annual Report 2019



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# ABOUT TREOIR

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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 to unmarried parents concerning legal, economic, parenting 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:

- 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

## TREOIR

- Operates a free, confidential National Specialist Information and signposting 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
- provides free tailored workshops to professionals and to parents' groups.
- engages with member organisations
- supports Kinship Care Ireland

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dr. Ruth Barrington, Chair  
Liam Kirwan, Treasurer, Independent Member  
Deirdre Pemberton, Secretary, Hear2help  
Marian Barnard, Anew  
Ciara McKenna, National Maternity Hospital Holles Street  
Patricia O'Donovan, Independent Member  
Louise Bayliss, SPARK  
Dave Saunders, From Lads to Dads  
Catherine McCurdy, Barnardos  
Robin Hanan, Independent Member  
Adele O'Connor, Doras Buí

Thomas Quigley, Bessborough Care Centre - Stepped down May 2019  
June Tinsely, Barnardos - Stepped down in May 2019

## TREOIR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Aislinn	Familibase Youth Service	Rainbows Ireland
Anew	Foróige	Rotunda Hospital
An Cosán	From Lads to Dads	Ringsend and Irishtown Family
Barnardos	Here-2-Help	Resource Centre
Bessborough Care Centre	Home-Start	Sligo Social Service Council
Clarecare	Limerick Social Services Council	SPARK
Coombe Women & Infants	Mary Immaculate College	St. Anne's Day Nursery
University Hospital	Men's Aid	St. Catherine's Community
Doras Buí	Carr's Child and Family Services	Services
Family Support Network	National Maternity Hospital	Women Supporting Women

## 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  
Sharon Kavanagh – Finance & Administration Officer  
Mary Roche – Information and Policy Officer

## MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON



Treoir, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children, was founded in 1976 and is the national representative organisation advocating for equal rights for unmarried parents and their children. Treoir's vision is of an Ireland where unmarried parents and their children enjoy full equality under the law, and where their legal, civil and economic rights are vindicated both in practice and in legislation. Treoir's 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.

During 2019, Treoir made significant progress in developing its specialist information services, expanding its membership, enhancing its funding, extending the reach of its communication and influencing policy towards unmarried parents and their children. The increased scale of activity last year is captured in this Report. I would like to complement Damien Peelo, CEO and the Treoir team for their commitment to the mission of Treoir, for their expertise in the complex area of law, policy and financial support for unmarried children and their parents and their empathy in communicating with clients. On behalf of the Council, I would like to express our thanks to our funders – the Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme of the Health Service Executive, Community Information Centres and Tusla who enable us to carry our important work. We were particularly pleased to respond to Tusla's request that Treoir assume greater financial responsibility for the Teenage Pregnancy Support Programme.

I would like to welcome the new member organisations of Treoir – From Lads to Dads, SPARK, Ringsend and Irishtown Family Resource Centre, Men's Aid and Women supporting Women and say how much we look forward to working with them and learning from their insights and experience.

Treoir was pleased to welcome new Council members during 2019 – Louise Bayliss of SPARK, Adele O'Connor of Doras Buí, Dave Saunders of Lads to Dads, Robin Hanan

– former Co-ordinator of the European Anti Poverty Network Ireland, Catherine McCurdy of Barnardos and Rosemary Grant, former Senior Social Worker, the Coombe Hospital who agreed to join at the end of 2019. We were very sorry that Thomas Quigley of Bessborough Care Centre Cork and June Tinsley of Barnardos stepped down from the Council. On behalf of the Council I would like to thank both of them for their outstanding commitment to the vision and mission of Treoir and wish them well in their future careers.

Dr. Ruth Barrington



Image 1: (from left to right) Chairperson Ruth Barrington, newly elected council member Cathy McCurdy, CEO Damien Peelo, newly elected council member Adele O'Connor - Launch of Treoir's Strategic Plane 2019-2023 at AGM 2019 (2019) Sam Dunne



## A NOTE FROM THE CEO

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We can look back on 2019 with pride and a sense of achievement for our work. There were many highlights throughout the year at an operational and governance level as detailed in the following pages. The team worked hard and well together to improve the outcomes for unmarried parents.

Producing the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023, was particularly important as it provides the focus for our work over the coming 5 years. In developing the plan, we re-examined our work and the issues affecting unmarried parents and explored what contributions Treoir could make to improving their lives in some new areas of work. I am really looking forward to working with the team and the Council to implement our strategic goals and I am excited about the new areas of work around shared parenting and mediation as these will add great value to the services for unmarried parents.

Our National Information Service continues to provide high quality information and support and there was a 23% increase in the number of queries to the service from the previous year. The outreach workshops continue to be a popular format for professionals and parents alike and we targeted new groups of unmarried parents that are often isolated and harder to reach. 400 people attended the workshops across the country.

We updated many of our most popular information leaflets and developed new infographics for the UN 17<sup>th</sup> October Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Treoir targeted communities who are experiencing social and economic disadvantage with our outreach for this project and made the links between information and poverty. Due to additional resources invested in information and policy, our analysis of the issues affecting unmarried families has deepened and enables us to gather more evidence from unmarried parent's lived experience which feed into our policy and advocacy work.

There was a significant increase of traffic to our website which is continually monitored and updated to improve information and accessibility. The investment of additional resources into membership and communication has demonstrated its impact. We have

already seen an increase in our membership which will have huge benefits for our policy and advocacy work as we move forward.

The Teen Parents Support Programme had another successful year and continues to co-ordinate and support the 11 projects nationwide. In 2019 a significant amount of work was carried with the local groups to explore how to expand the school completion funding to all projects resulting in a more equitable outcome for all.

It was an important development for Treoir to be invited to present to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality on the Reform of the Family Law System and especially to see many of our recommendations in the final report of the Committee.

Our annual talk after our AGM “*Family Law – the case for reform and a review of cohabitation legislation*” was well attended and we are very thankful to Helen Coughlan, vice chair of the Family Law Committee of the Law Library. Her talk was informative and challenging and highlighted the need for reform of the Family Law Courts system.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the team at Treoir for their hard work and dedication. The new staff have integrated well, and the sharing of knowledge helps create a supportive working environment.

To our funders, the HSE CHO9, Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Citizen’s Information Board and Tusla, we are grateful for your continued support and collaboration.

Finally, I would like to thank the Council of Treoir for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Without their voluntary contribution Treoir could not function. Thank you for your dedication to making Ireland a more equal society for all.

Damien Peelo



## 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 for them.**

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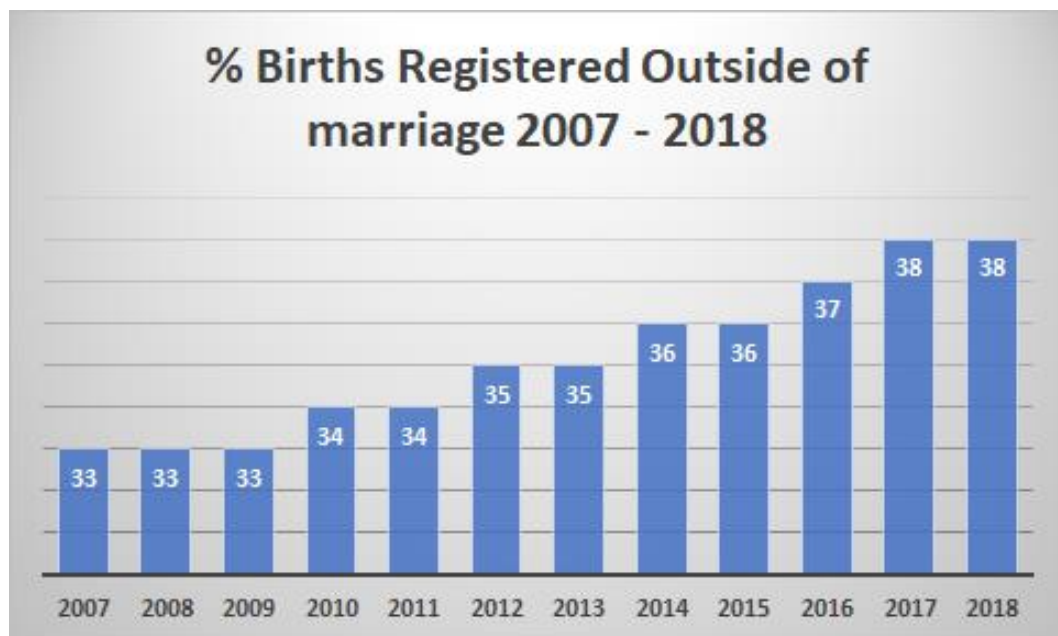
The National Specialist Information Service continues to be a core part of Treoir's service provision. Treoir promotes the service nationwide through online advertisement, social media, our publications, posters in libraries, health centres, community centres, and by word of mouth. The high volume of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

The number of calls and queries has increased during 2019, and as in previous years, were more complex and time consuming and reflects the growing complexities experienced by unmarried parents.

Births registered outside of marriage continues to rise annually with 38% of births registered as outside of marriage in 2018 according to the Central Statistics Office vital statistics report 2018 (CSO, 2018) as set out in fig. 1 below.

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

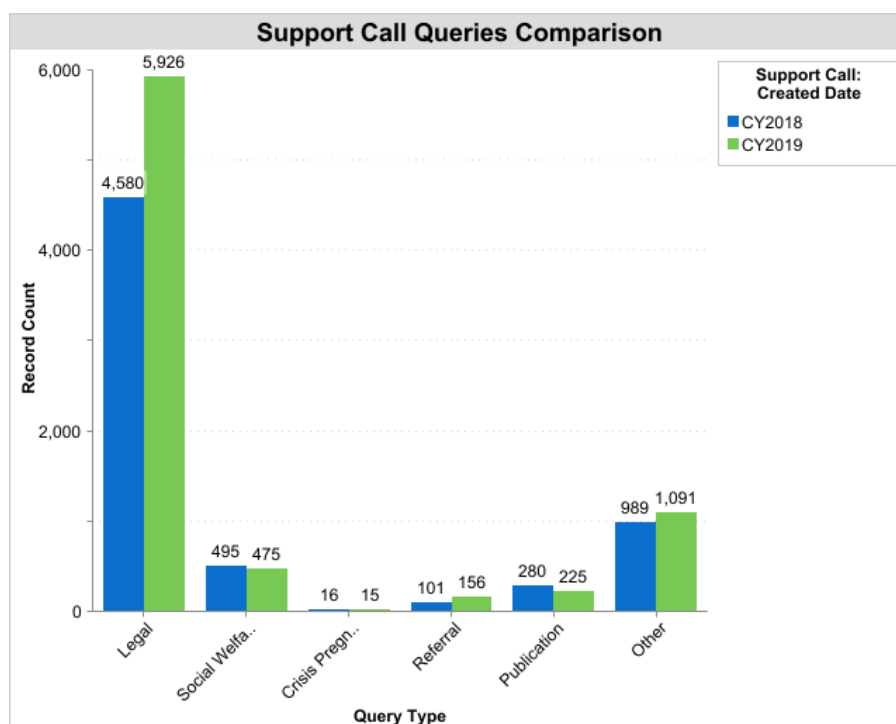
**Fig 1. % Births Registered Outside of Marriage 2007 – 2018**



## A. CALLS TO THE NATIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE

Treoir National Specialist Information Service dealt with **7,888** queries in 2019 logged against **3,292** Support Calls. As shown in the fig 2. below, this there has been an **increase of 23%** (1,427) on queries recorded in 2018. Callers often have more than one query on issues such as legislation, social welfare and/or shared parenting which accounts for the difference between the number of enquiries and actual calls.

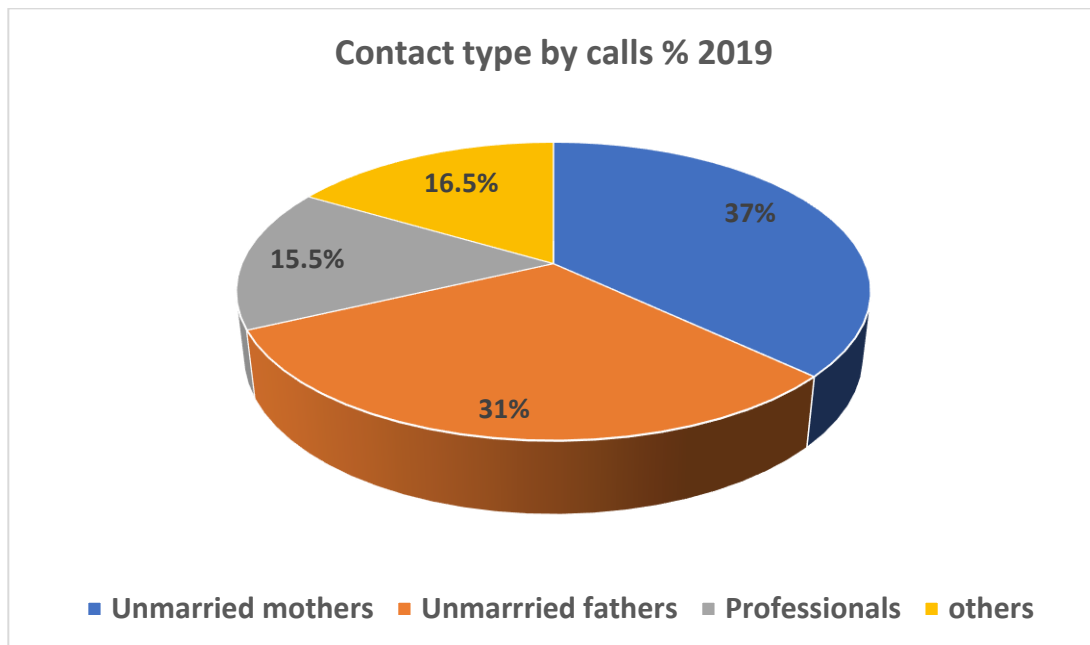
**Fig 2. Support call queries comparison 2018 v 2019**



### 1. Contact Type by Calls

The majority of calls received in 2019 were from the category ‘unmarried mothers’ i.e: 37% amounting to 1,221 individual calls. This is followed closely by the category ‘unmarried fathers’ i.e: 31% amounting to 1,025 individual calls, including repeat callers

Treoir continues to support a high number of professionals who use the information service for support. Issues affecting unmarried families can be complex and the Treoir service continues to provide clarity for professionals who need that support in understanding the nuances of family law, with 15.5% of all calls coming from professionals. The remaining 16.5% of other callers include friends, adult children, LGBTQI+, and others as illustrated in fig 3 below.

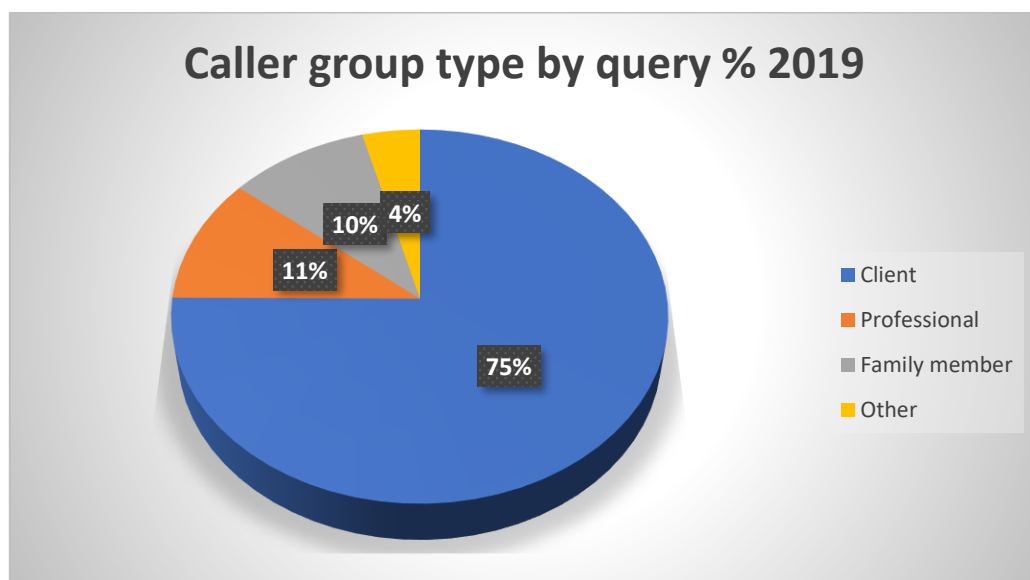


**Fig 3. Contact type by calls % 2019**

### 1. Contact Type by Queries

In terms of queries by contact type, 75% were from clients, mainly from parents, 11% were from professionals, 10% by family members and the remaining queries were from ‘others’ such as adult child, LGBTQI+, and friends. Percentages of calls v queries demomnstrtates the complexity of calls given the level of queries dealt with, in general, calls from parents themselves tend to relate to various different areas of family law, mediation and parenting issues.

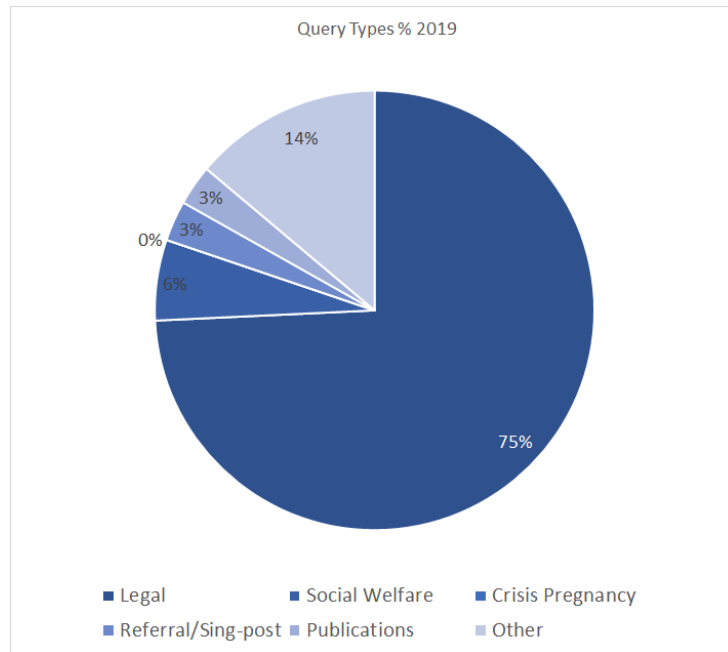
**Fig 4. Caller group type by query % 2019**



### 2. Types of Queries

The majority of queries dealt with in 2019 were categorized as **Legal (75%)**, **Other (14%)**, **Social Welfare (6%)**, **Publications (3%)** and **Sign-posts** (referrals to other services) (3%) which are summarised in section 3.

**Fig 5. Types of Queries % 2019**

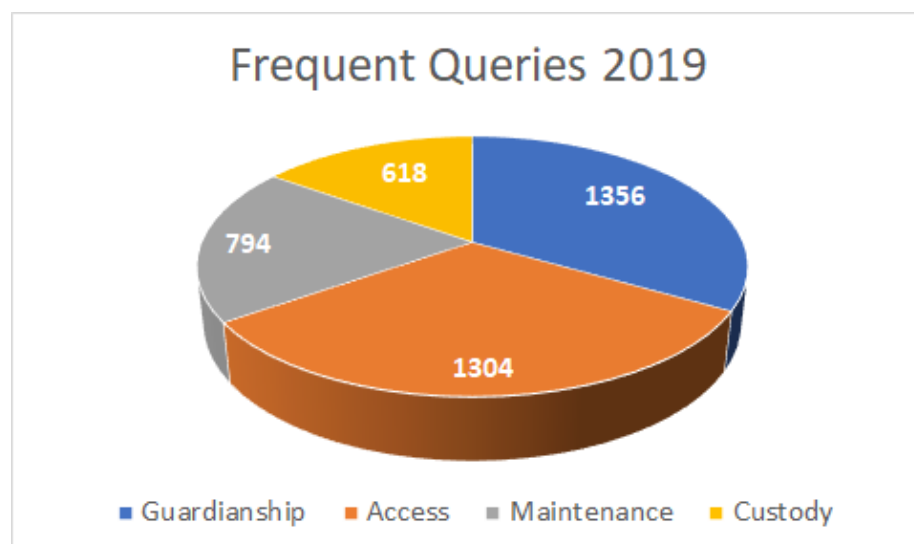


A breakdown of the category **‘other’** dealt with queries in relation to Parenting (506), Mediation (171), Housing (123), Counselling (60) and other access issues (25).

## 2.1 Legal Queries

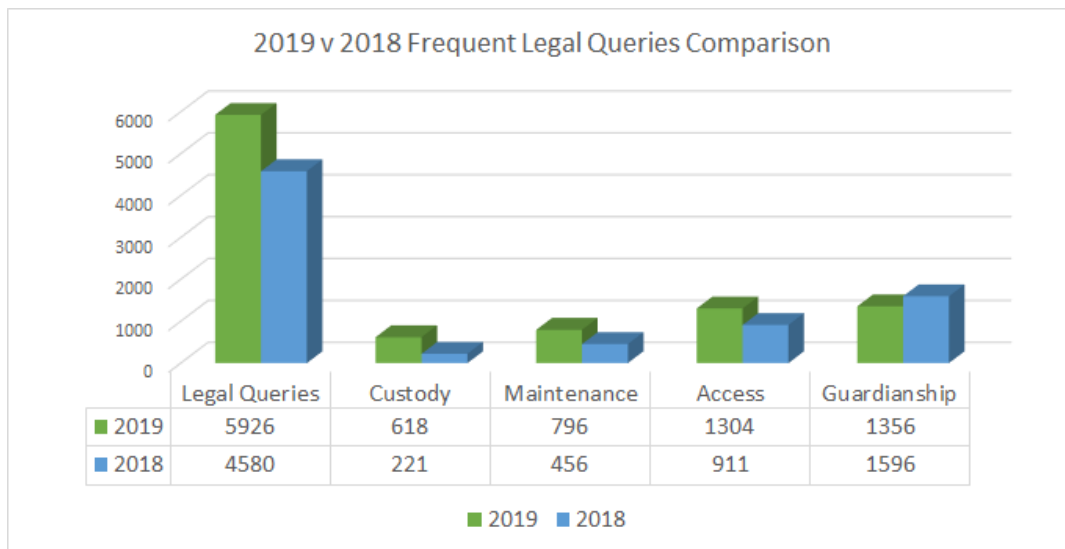
Legal queries feature as the highest percentage of queries dealt with in 2019, a similar pattern to recent years. Adjustments to the collection of data from callers were carried out throughout 2018 and 2019 to capture increased complexities of issues parents were experiencing. These complexities are illustrated in the section below: ‘Frequent Queries’, Regular Queries’ and ‘Other Queries’. Parents often raise ‘frequent queries’, but upon obtaining information, often receive other relevant information relating to their specific circumstances as the complexity of their individual situation unfolds during calls to an information officer.

**Fig 6. Frequent Queries 2019**



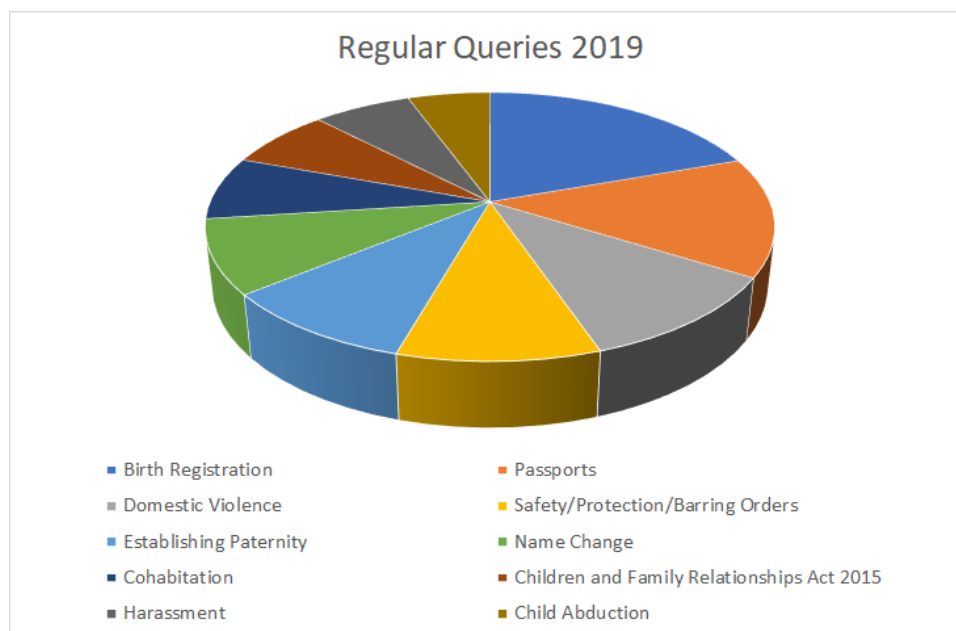
Out of a sample of **5,926 legal queries**, the most frequent issues dealt with related to **Guardianship 23%** (1,356 queries), **Access 22%** (1,304 queries), followed by **Maintenance 10%** (794 queries), and **Custody 10.5%** (618).

**Fig 7. 2019 v 2018 Frequent Legal Queries Comparison**



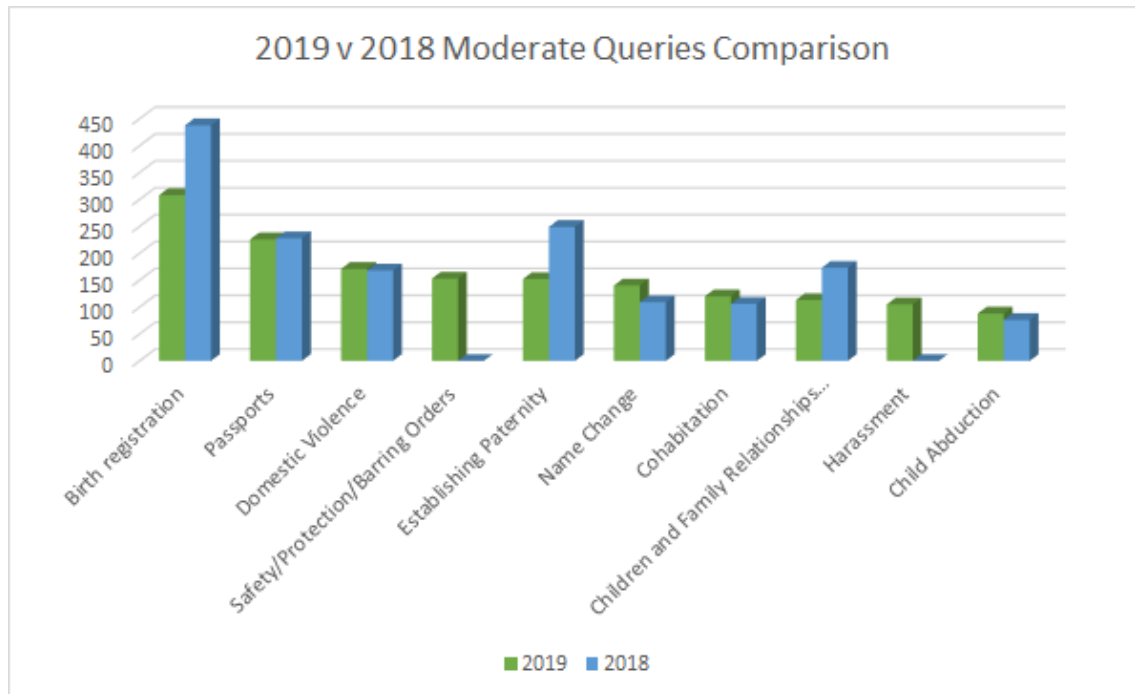
In comparison to 2018, frequent **legal** queries in 2019 increased by **29.4%** (1,346). Issues relating to custody in **2019** saw a significant increase on 2018 queries at **180%** (397), while **maintenance** increased by **75%** (340), and queries relating to **access** increased by **40%** (393). Queries relating to **Guardianship** decreased by **-15%** (-240).

**Fig 8. Regular Queries 2019**



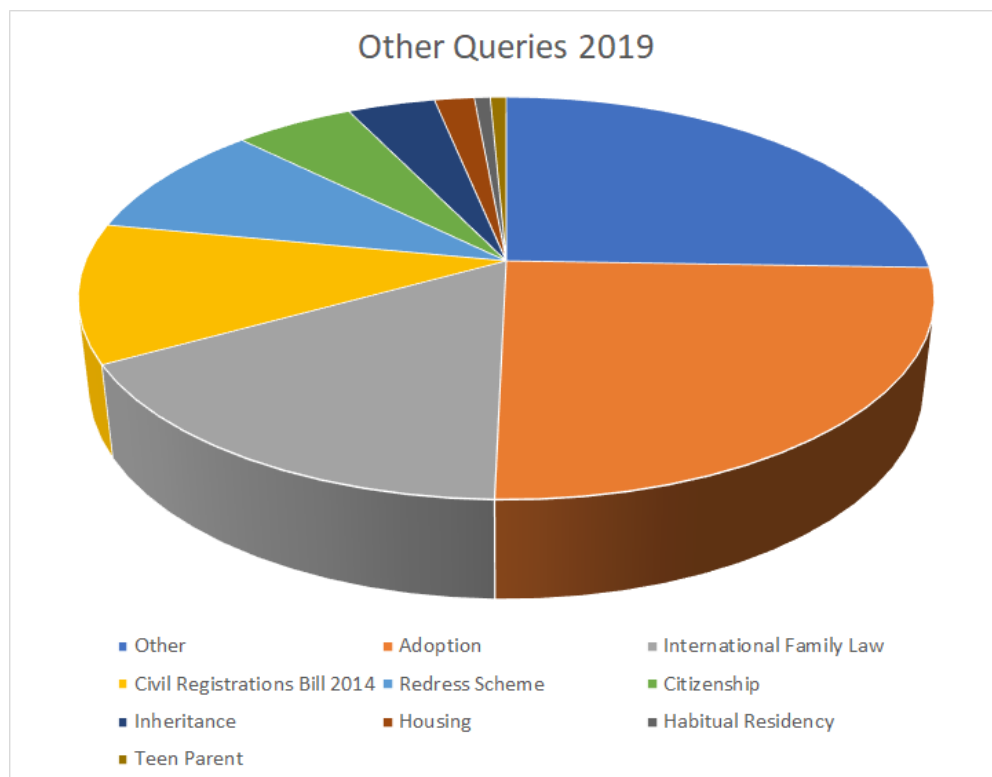
Regular queries were **Birth Registration** (308), **Passports** (226), **Domestic Violence** (171), **Safety/Protection/Barring Orders** (153), **Establishing Paternity** (152), **Name Change** (140), **Cohabitation** (120), **Children and Family Relationship Act 2015** (113), **Harassment** (105), and **Child Abduction** (88).

Fig 10. 2019 v 2018 Moderate Queries Comparison



Other queries related to Adoption (69), International Family Law (46), Civil Registration Bill 2014 (31), Redress Scheme (26), Citizenship (15), Inheritance (11), Housing (5), Habitual Residency (2), and Teen Parents.

Fig 11. Other Queries 2019



## 2.2 Parents' Legal Queries

As illustrated in fig 12. guardianship continues to be the most frequent query under the legal category with queries coming from both parents, but slightly higher in fathers. As unmarried fathers do not have the same legal rights to guardianship of their children as married fathers, there is an ongoing need for information for parents. There are four different means under Irish law by which an unmarried father can acquire guardianship which may explain the frequency of the queries on this issue.

The four ways are by:

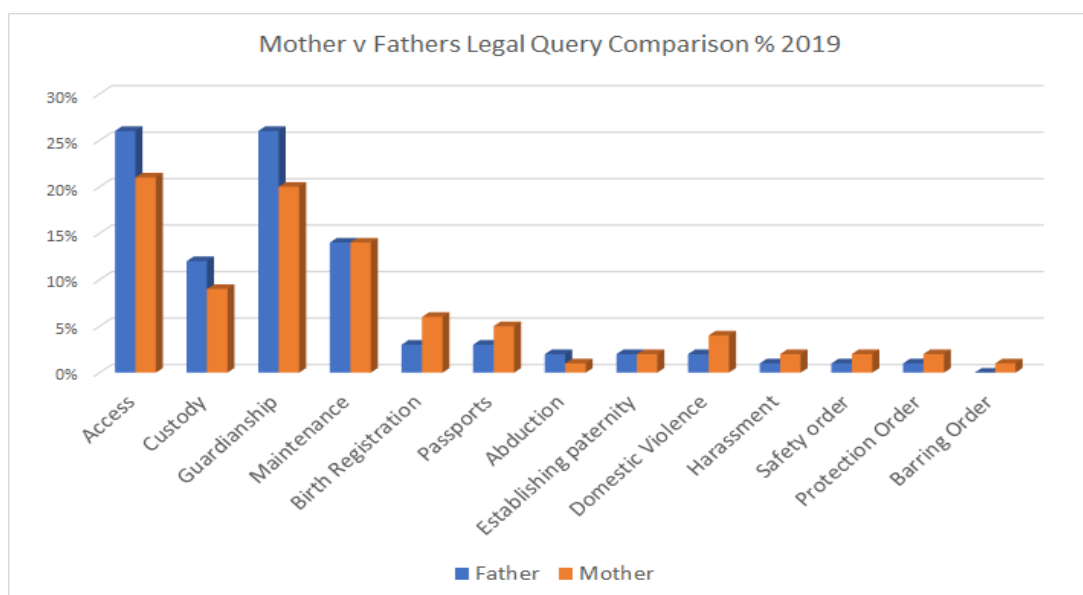
- Signing a Statutory Declaration with the mothers' consent
- Satisfying the cohabitation period
- Applying to the Court for a guardianship order
- Marrying the mother

Feedback from the Information Service suggests callers are not always aware of the specific rights and duties related to guardianship, that it is not granted on the birth or registration of their child, how it differs from custody and is not linked to maintenance.

Treoir continued to advocate for a Register of Guardianship during 2019 and for equal rights and responsibilities to guardianship of their children for unmarried fathers.

In terms of access and custody, queries from fathers are slightly higher than mothers, which also reflects the legal situation of unmarried fathers who do not have automatic access to, and custody rights of their children. There is no obligations on fathers to seek access, or take up access obtained through the courts, which mothers often raise as an issue. At present joint guardianship for unmarried parents has to be established. When guardianship is in place it puts a statutory obligation on both parents to take responsibility of their children.

**Fig 12. Mothers v Fathers Legal Query Comparison % 2019**



Maintenance continues to be an important issue for both mothers and fathers equally, with mothers seeking information around applying for maintenance and enforcement orders, and fathers querying affordability issues and variation orders.

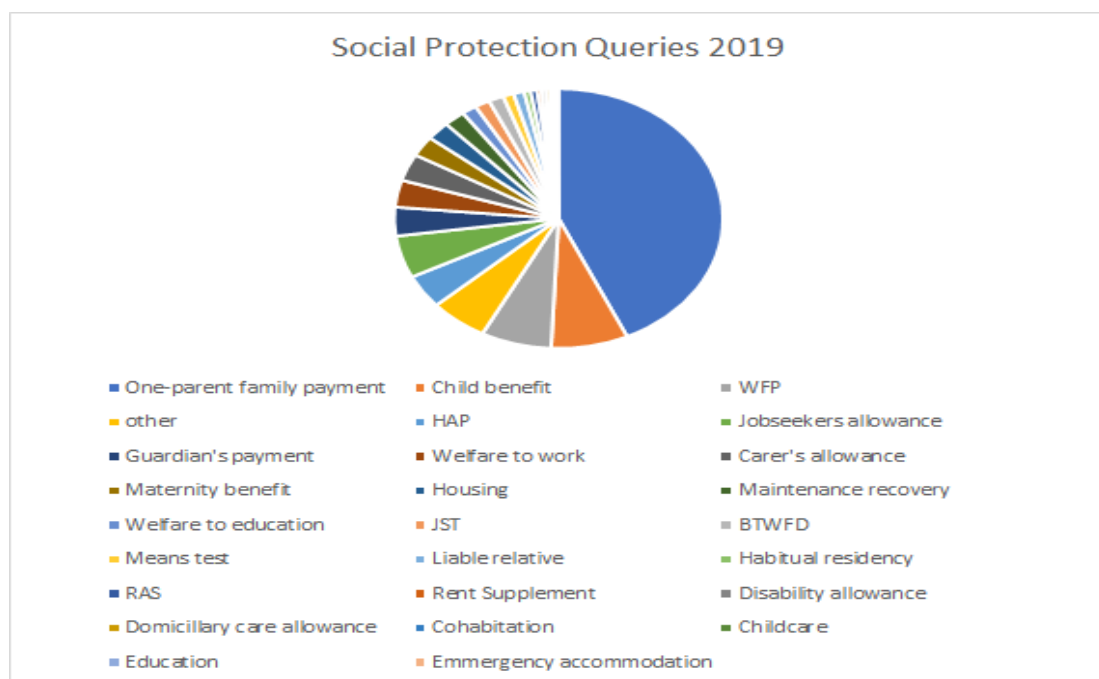
Queries relating to domestic abuse feature more frequently with mothers applying for more safety/protection and barring orders than fathers. Harassment is also a significant challenge experienced by parents.

## 2.3 Social Protection Queries

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

Social Protection queries made up **6%** (475) of all queries to the Treoir Specialist Information Service in 2019. While most queries related to one-parent family payments, where client receive their required information, they often have follow-up queries regarding other social welfare supports which accounts for the variety of less frequent queries dealt with in 2019.

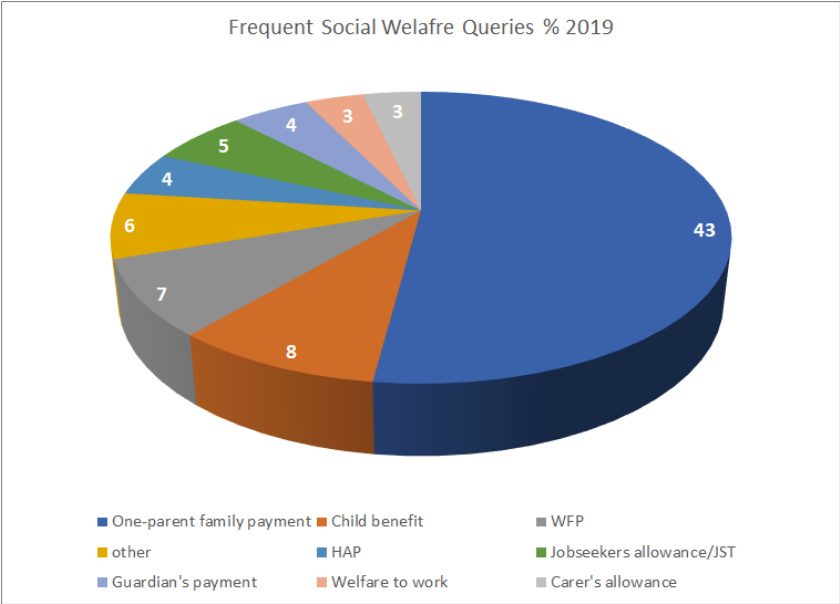
Fig 13. Social Protection Queries 2019



An illustration of all social protection queries is shown in fig 13. above. A breakdown of the more frequent queries is as follows: **One Parent Family Payment 43%** (205 queries), **Jobseekers Allowance and Jobseekers Transitional Payments 5%** (25 queries) and **Child Benefit 8%** (36 queries) illustrated in fig 14. below.

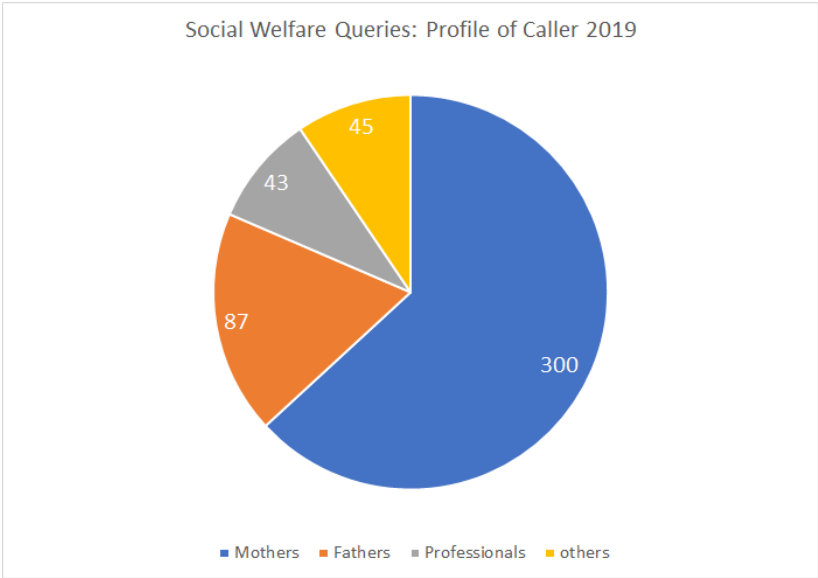


Fig 14. Frequent Social Welfare Queries % 2019



Most social welfare queries were made by parents: **mothers (300)**, **Fathers (87)** **Professionals (47)**, with a smaller portion made by ‘others’ which are represented on fig 15. below.

Fig 15. Social Welfare Queries: Profile of Caller 2019



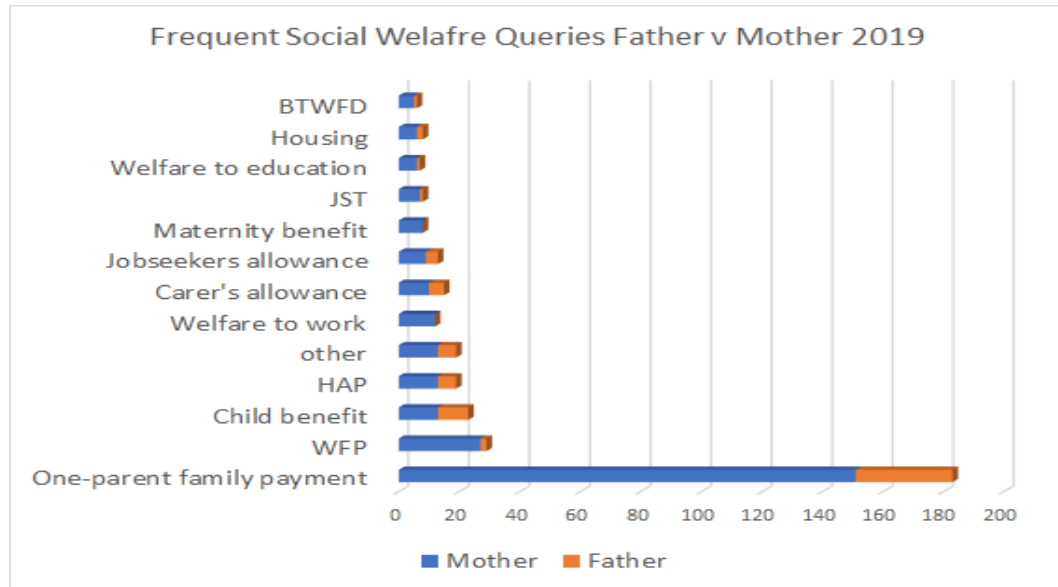
Social welfare queries from **mothers** feature strongly, representing **63%** of all queries in contrast with **fathers** who represent just **18%**, illustrating a significantly higher reliance on social welfare supports for mothers than fathers.

A further breakdown and comparison of frequent social welfare queries on a sub-query level presents interesting findings in terms of the type of queries made by mothers versus fathers. Mothers seek information about the one-parent family payment support which represents 50% of all social welfare queries, whereas the highest percentage of queries made by fathers relate to

child benefit, jobseekers' benefit/allowance and housing support. A small number of social welfare queries relate to cohabiting parents.

Calls from professionals represent just 9%, with sub-queries across many social welfare supports, which may account for the complex nature of supports for unmarried parents given the variety available, and the means test process.

**Fig 16. Frequent Social Welfare Queries – Fathers v Mothers 2019**



## 2.4 Other Queries

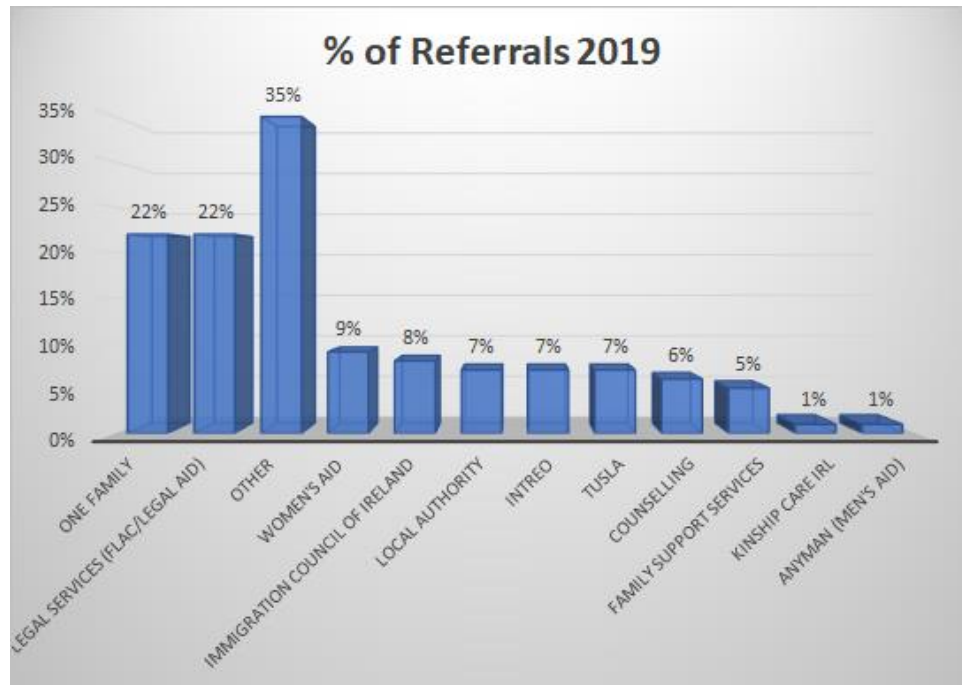
Thirteen percent of all calls fall into the ‘other’ category. Within this category, **Shared Parenting** was the most frequently reported issue after legal queries. Out of a sample of 1,091 ‘other’ queries: 46% related to **Shared Parenting**, followed by **Mediation** at 16%, and **Housing** at 11% of the queries. Queries relating to child protection, declining access, kinship care and counselling make up some of the other queries in this category.

## 3. Referrals/Sign-posts

Treoir’s Information Officers often refer/sign-post callers to appropriate services based on further supports and information clients may require. Out of a sample of 156 referrals/sign-posts, **22%** of referrals were to One Family and **22%** to Legal Services such as FLAC and the Legal Aid Board. **20%** of calls were to ‘other’ services illustrating the complexity of supports required by our callers. **9%** of client referrals were to Women’s Aid, **8%** to the Irish Immigration Council of Ireland. Other referrals include local authorities, Intreo services, TUSLA, counselling, AnyMan (Men’s Aid) and other family support services.

Signposting for mothers represented **42%** of all referrals while fathers represent **20%**. This can be explained by a higher percentage of referrals to Women’s Aid and family support services, where fathers are referred to legal services.

Fig 17. % of Referrals 2019



#### 4. Method of contact

The vast majority of contact is by **telephone**, with **80%** of all queries (6,299 queries) handled by Treoir's confidential Information Helpline Service. **10%** of contact was handled by **email** (803 email queries). The remaining **9%** (779) of contact is made up of people who called in person to Treoir's office, contacted us by order form, or through social media.

#### 5. Parents Profile

The majority of clients using our Information Service are **parents**, accounting for 2,246 callers, with 'unmarried mothers' accounting for 37% with 1,221 individual calls and 'unmarried fathers' accounting for 31% with 1,025 individual calls, including repeat callers. The remaining 32% include professionals, family members, friends and others.

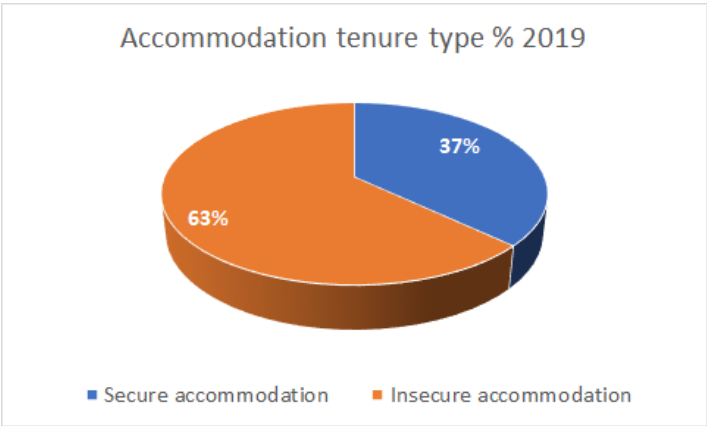
As fig 3. above illustrates parents continue to show the highest level of calls and queries at 68% and 75% respectively. The following sub-sections provides a profile of parents in terms of accommodation, employment, welfare supports and age range.

##### 5.1 Accommodation Type

Out of 3,292 callers, **1,625** provided specific details of their accommodation type. Out of that sample, **436** are homeowners, **160** are in local authority housing, **351** are in private rented accommodation, **178** are receipt of housing assistance payment, **386** are at home with parents. The remaining **114** callers are in a variety of some form of supported or temporary accommodation such as direct provision, family hubs, emergency accommodation, sheltered accommodation or in refuges. Of significance, from this sample, and given the type of

accommodation recorded, **63%** of callers are in insecure, shared or temporary accommodation such as private rented homes, or living with their parents. **37%** of this sample are in local authority housing or their own homes.

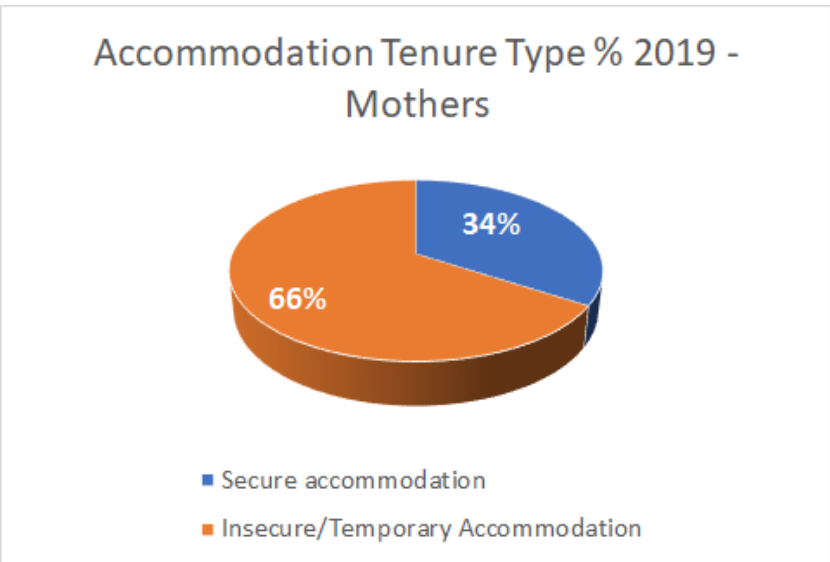
**Fig 18. Accommodation Tenure Type % 2019**



**5.1.1 Mothers**

Out of a sample of 1,221 callers who identified as an ‘unmarried mother’, 723 stated their accommodation type. Out of that sample, **136** are homeowners, **92** are in local authority housing, **137** are in private rented accommodation, a further **137** are in receipt of housing assistance payment, and **155** are at home with their own parents. The remaining **66** callers are in a variety of some form of supported or temporary accommodation such as direct provision, family hubs, emergency accommodation, or in refuges. Of significance, from this sample, and given the type of accommodation recorded, **66%** of mothers are in unsecure, shared or temporary accommodation such as private rented homes, or living with their parents. **34%** of this sample are in local authority housing or their own homes, which is similar to the overall caller averages.

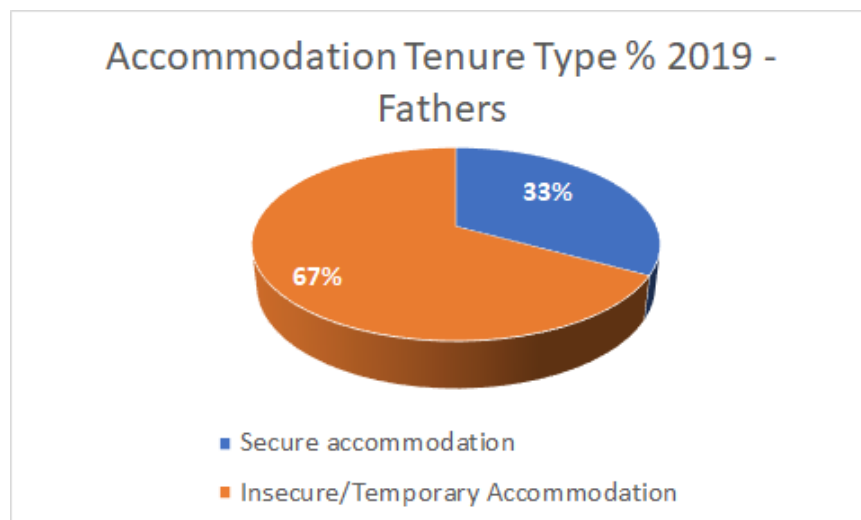
**Fig 19. Accommodation Tenure Type % 2019 - Mothers**



### 5.1.2 Fathers

Out of a sample of 1,025 callers who identified as an ‘unmarried father’, 631 stated their accommodation type. Out of that sample, **172** are homeowners, **36** are in local authority housing, **167** are in private rented accommodation, **33** are in receipt of housing assistance payment, and **193** are at home with their own parents. The remaining **30** callers are in a variety of some form of supported or temporary accommodation such as direct provision, family hubs, emergency accommodation, prison or sheltered accommodation. Of significance, from this sample, and given the type of accommodation recorded, **66%** of fathers are in insecure, shared or temporary accommodation such as private rented homes or living with their parents. **34%** of this sample are in local authority housing or their own homes, which is similar to the overall caller averages.

Fig 20. Accommodation Tenure Type % 2019 – Fathers



## 5.2 Income type

### 5.2.1 Social Welfare Recipient

Out of all callers to the Information Service, 1,929 were recorded as being in receipt of some form of **Social Welfare** support which amounts to 59% of overall callers. Out of the sample of 1,929 callers in receipt of some form of social welfare support, **65% are mothers**, and **23% are fathers**, which is similar to other trends we see in social welfare queries made by mothers and indicative of the reliance on welfare supports within the lone parent cohort.

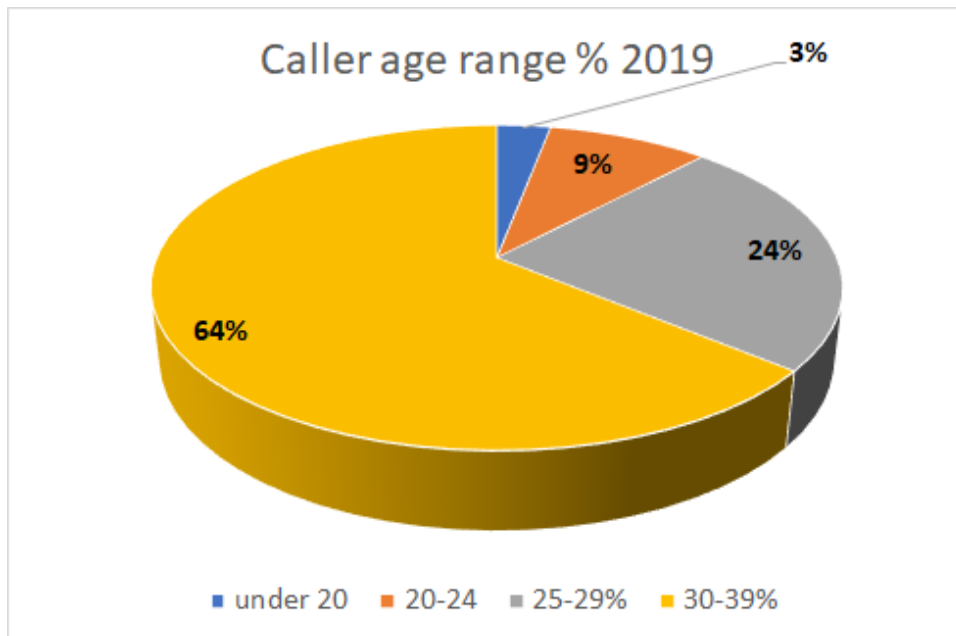
### 5.2.2 Employment Status

Out of 3,292 callers 2,140 were recorded as being in some form of **employment**, **57% are mothers** and **48% are fathers**. This indicates that mothers who are in employment are often also in receipt of in-work welfare supports.

### 5.2.3. Age Range

Out of 3,292 callers, 1,570 provided their age range. Out of that sample, the majority is between the ages of **thirty and thirty-nine years of age at 64%**. The second largest percentage is between the ages of **twenty-four and twenty-nine years of age at 24%**.

Fig 21. Caller Age Range % 2019



### 5.2.5 Caller Queries by Geographical Spread

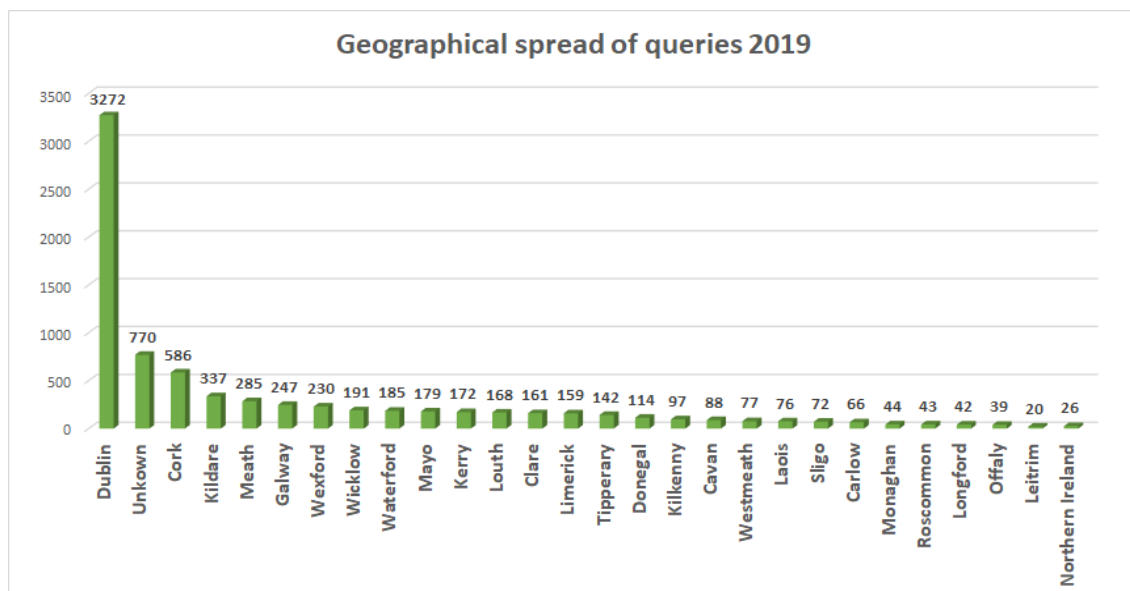


Fig 22. Geographical Spread of Queries 2019

Out of our sample of 7,888 queries, Dublin represents the largest percentage at **41%**. 770 queries were made by callers who did not disclose their location or were made by email or Facebook/Twitter.

### 5.2.6 Caller Query by Nationality

Out of our sample of 7,888 queries, 75% of callers identified as Irish, while 12% did not disclose their nationality. 7% identified as being from the EU and 15 from the United Kingdom, while 5% identified other nationalities.

## 6. 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 calls. 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**

#### **STEP-PARENT ADOPTION**

*A single parent contacted Treoir and asked if her partner who is not the father of her child could adopt the child. Her partner had lived with the woman and the child for seven years. The mother was the sole guardian of the child. The child's biological father had not been in contact with the child for over 10 years. She did not know where the father was living.*

*The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 came into effect in October 2017. It changed many parts of the Adoption Act 2010.*

*Step-parents can now apply to adopt their spouse's or partner's child without the partner who is already the biological parent of the child, also applying to adopt the child. The Act widened the interpretation of "step-parent" "to include the civil partner of a parent of the child; a cohabitant in a cohabiting couple where the other cohabitant is a parent of the child; and the spouse of a parent of the child. The child must have lived with the biological parent and partner together for a minimum of two years.*

*The biological parent can consent to the adoption while keeping parental rights and responsibilities.*

*The mother is automatically a guardian of her child and her consent is always required before an adoption order can be made. If the child's biological father is a legal guardian, his consent to the adoption is required by law. However, the father of a child who is not a guardian of the child has a right to be consulted in relation to the adoption.*

*The mother did not have any contact details for the father. She was informed that where consultation with the father is not possible, the Adoption Authority, having first obtained the approval of the High Court, may make the adoption order without consulting the birth father. The mother was informed that the views of the child shall be ascertained by the Adoption Authority or by the court and shall be given due weight, having regard to the age and maturity of the child.*

*The Information Officer gave her contact details for Tusla The Child and Family Agency and The Adoption Authority of Ireland.*

**Treoir welcomed the many positive changes in The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, in particular, the provision allowing step-parent adoption without the peculiar requirement for the biological parent to adopt his or her own child which had been the case before the new adoption legislation came into effect.**



## **CASE STUDY NO.2**

### **DECLARATION OF PARENTAGE**

*A mother contacted Treoir and enquired if it was possible to add the details of the father of her child to the child's birth certificate. The father of the child had died suddenly when she was pregnant. When she went to register the birth of the baby, she was informed that she could not put the father's name and details on the birth certificate because she was not married to him.*

*Where parents are married to each other there is a presumption in law that the husband is the father of the child unless the contrary is proved. If parents are not married to each other there is no presumption in law as to who is the father of the child, unless the father's name is on the birth certificate.*

*She enquired if it was possible to re-register the birth of the baby to add the father's name to the birth certificate.*

#### **Declaration of parentage**

*A person can seek an order in the Circuit Court that a certain person is his/her mother or father. This can be done even if the parent is dead. This may arise where a parent has died, and the child is making a claim on the estate of the deceased parent and paternity has not already been established.*

***The Declaration of Parentage can be used to add the father's details to the child's birth certificate.***

## **CASE STUDY NO.3**

### **STEP-CHILDREN AND INHERITANCE TAX**

*A man contacted Treoir for information on inheritance tax. When he was five years old his mother married a man, who was not his biological father. His step-father raised him and his siblings and provided for them all their lives. He wanted to know how he and his siblings, as step-children are treated under the categories for inheritance tax.*

#### **Capital Acquisitions Tax**

*Those who receive an inheritance following a death may be liable to pay inheritance tax. The gift or inheritance sum will be taxed if it is over a certain limit or threshold dictated by the relationship between the deceased and the beneficiary. Capital Acquisitions Tax is charged at 33 percent on the amount above the threshold for the group they fall into.*

*The tax-free threshold for Group A is €335,000.*

*The tax-free threshold for Group B is €32,500. This category applies to siblings, nieces and nephews of the deceased*

*The tax-free threshold for Group C is €16,250. This category applies to people who have no familial relationship with the person who has died. They will be taxed on all inheritance after the first €16,250.*

***Group A applies to the children of the deceased, including adopted children, step children and certain foster children. The tax free threshold for Group A is €335,000.***



## B. PUBLICATIONS

### 1. Information Pack for Unmarried Parents

The Information Pack for Unmarried Parents was updated in 2019. This pack is Treoir's principal publication and is updated every year. It is funded by the HSE Sexual Health and Wellbeing Programme and Tusla. The Pack contains essential information for unmarried parents, their families and for those working with unmarried parents. It includes information on access, custody, guardianship, shared parenting, MyOptions, money during pregnancy and financial information following birth, as well as information on child abduction, domestic violence and much more.

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](http://www.treoir.ie). All publications are also available to order via an electronic form available on our website. The Pack continues to be a hugely popular resource for both unmarried families and for professionals & NGOs working with unmarried families.

### 2. Leaflets

Work was undertaken in updating Treoir's information leaflet series throughout 2019. Leaflets explain in detail the radical changes in Family Law introduced in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, the changes to social welfare rates, and updated service provisions in relevant organisations.

The following is a list of Treoir's leaflets:

- **Guardianship**
- **Access and Custody**
- **Maintenance**
- **Unmarried Fathers**
- **Passports**
- **Cohabiting Parents**
- **Establishing Paternity**
- **International Child Abduction**
- **Step-Parent Adoption**
- **Shared Parenting**
- **Birth Registration**
- **Child Abduction**
- **Explaining family relationships to a child**

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, all maternity hospitals and Family Courts. They are available to view and download from the Treoir website [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie).

### 3. Other Publications

Through funding from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for a project during UN Eradication of Poverty week, Treoir developed an infographic highlighting simple information on Guardianship, Access and Custody and Maintenance as well as some ‘myth busters’. The infographic publication was well received during a four-day site visit to locations in Ballyfermot, Ballymun, Tallaght and Dublin City Centre.

**\*More info on UN Eradication of Poverty event in section on Public Relations**

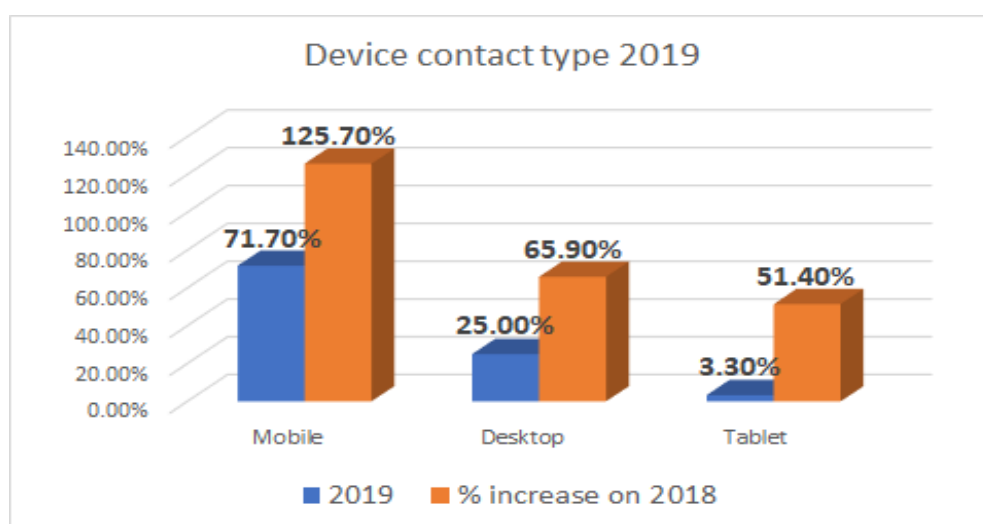
## C. WEBSITE

Treoir’s website is informative, factual and kept up to date with information for unmarried families and those working with them. Treoir maintains the website to ensure that it remains accessible and easy to navigate. The main purpose of Treoir’s website is to provide specialist information to unmarried parents, their extended families and to professionals working with them. The service is for unmarried parents, living together or apart, both opposite and same-sex couples.

Many clients email Treoir directly through the website requesting information and/or publications. The website is updated regularly, and new publications are added, and current publications are constantly updated to ensure a continuity of factual and concise information. All publications are available to download through our online order form now available through the website.

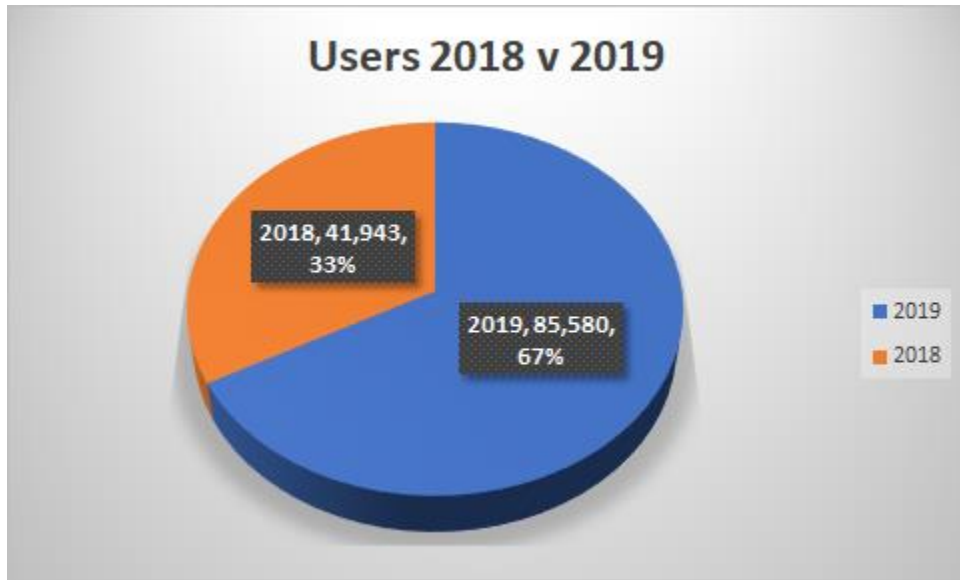
Our new look, mobile responsive website went live in the first quarter of 2019. The new format makes it even easier for people to find the information they want more quickly. Since the launch of the new website there has been consistent increase in user activity, with most users accessing the website via mobile devices, as shown in fig 23. below.

**Fig 23. Contact to Treoir’s website by Device 2019**



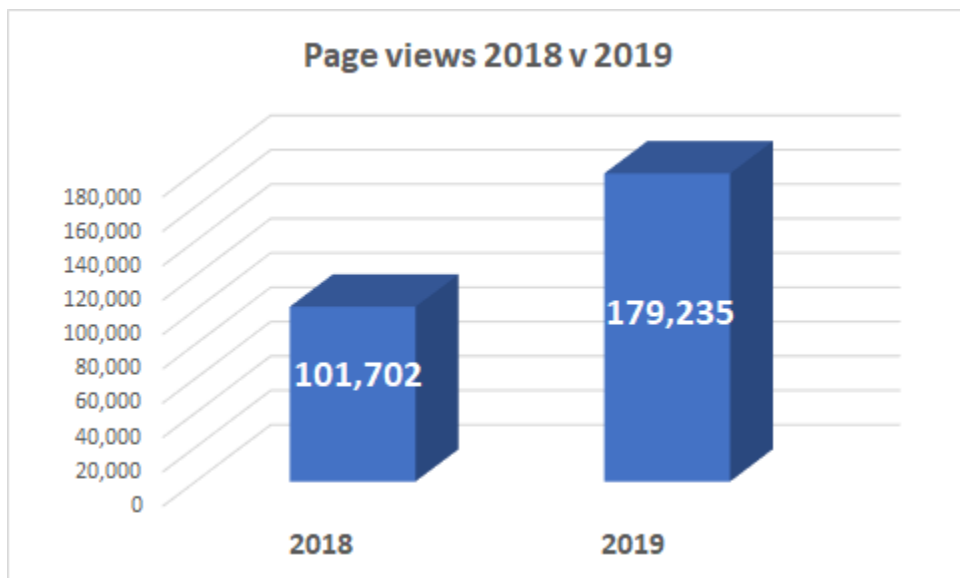
Activity through the website has increased significantly. In 2019, the website received 85,580 users which is a 67% increase on 2018 figures, as shown in fig 24. below with users visiting several information pages.

**Fig 24. Users 2018 v 2019**



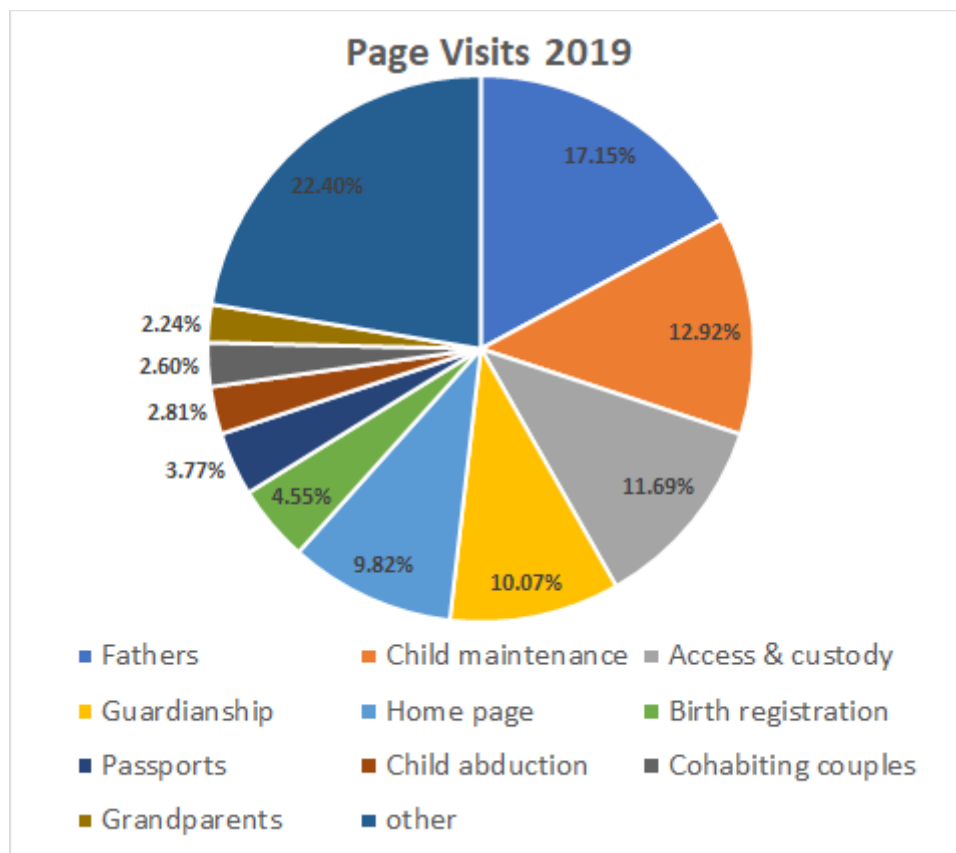
In 2019, there were 179,225 page visits on Treoir website, versus 101,702 in 2018, an increase of 76.24%.

**Fig 25. Page Views 2018 v 2019**



As illustrated in fig 26. below, the most popular pages visited in 2019 were: fathers (17.15%), Child Maintenance (12.92%) and Access & Custody (11.69%). Other pages represent 22.40%, the more frequently visited pages within this section were mothers, Step-parents, Shared parenting, Establishing Paternity and Publications.

Fig 26. Page Visits 2019



New users account for **83%** of visitors with **17%** return visitors, indicating the effectiveness of information available to users of the website.

## Summary

As demonstrated by our figures above, the decision to upgrade our website to facilitate mobile devices has proven to be a good investment with high yields in terms of connectivity with our service users. As births outside of marriage continue to increase annually it is vital that Treoir continues to respond to changing demographic as younger persons are becoming increasingly IT literate.

In terms of the information being accessed online, trends are very much in line with the trend we have seen in callers/emails to the information service except for 'fathers' who access information through our website more regularly than 'mothers'.

Treoir will continue to monitor activity on our website, and review content to ensure information is up-to-date, concise, accurate and fully accessible to our clients.

## 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.

*Workshops can be tailored to respond to the needs of individual groups.*

The workshops provide information on:

- the legal rights and responsibilities of unmarried parents regarding access, custody, guardianship, birth registration, maintenance, cohabitation, passports etc.
- social welfare allowances, employment and training/education opportunities which are available to parents
- shared parenting and explaining family relationships to children

Treoir provided 26 workshops to groups throughout the country in 2019. Workshops took place in Cashel, Cork, Dublin, Ennis, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Meath and Tralee. A total of four hundred and seventeen people attended the workshops.

### Workshops for workers

Treoir hosted 20 workshops to groups of workers who provide services to unmarried parents and their extended families. Workshops were attended by service providers from statutory, voluntary, community and youth work sectors.

Treoir contributed to the *Tusla National Child and Family Support Week 2019* by providing a training workshop on the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015, to a range of specialist service providers in Tipperary who are supported by Tusla. The workshop was attended by youth & community workers, social workers, teachers, gardai and workers from family resource centers, domestic abuse services, addiction services etc.

Workshops were also provided to Citizens Information Services and Citizens Information Centers. One workshop was provided to a class of secondary students.

### Workshops for parents

Five workshops were provided to parents attending support services throughout the country, including:

- A support programme for young mothers
- A support programme for men who are struggling/in distress
- A self-help and support group for fathers
- A community resource center for one-parent families
- A support service for parents attending a local community project

Participants at the workshops are informed of all the services provided by Treoir including its publications, its role in advocating for the rights of unmarried parents and Treoir's National Information Service. Treoir's advocacy and policy work can be informed by issues identified by participants at the workshops. Participants receive a selection of Treoir leaflets and Treoir's Information Pack for Unmarried Parents.

## ISSUES RAISED/IDENTIFIED IN WORKSHOPS

There were many questions regarding guardianship such as:

- What does guardianship mean?
- What is the difference between guardianship and custody of a child?
- When a father satisfies the cohabitation conditions for automatic guardianship, how can he prove that he cohabited with the mother for the required 12 months including 3 months with the child when there is a disagreement or uncertainty regarding the issue
- How many guardians can a child have?
- How can grandparents and relatives become guardians of a child who is in their care?
- What is the difference between step-parent guardianship and step-parent adoption?
- Must a grandparent/relative be a guardian of a child to qualify for the Guardian's Payment?

The father's name on his child's birth certificate does not give the father any legal rights when the child is born in the Republic of Ireland. Many workers and parents attending workshops believed that the father had automatic rights if his name was on the child's birth certificate.

Some mothers reported that they had been informed by the Gardai that the father's consent was required for the child's passport because his name was on the child's birth certificate. The father's consent is only required if he is a guardian of his child.

## Feedback from participants at workshops

*"Thank you so much for your workshop today. Everyone really enjoyed it. We all learned so much. We look forward to working with you again in the future. It was great to have all the leaflets and printouts to take away to refer back to in the future."*

**Workers at Meath Partnership**

*"Thank you for facilitating the team's training yesterday. We really appreciate you coming here to us and delivering such thought-provoking training which is so relevant to our work. We look forward to using Treoir as a resource and it is very reassuring to know about your service and the legislation you highlighted with us."*

**Project Leader HSE Social Inclusion and Addiction Service**

*"Thank you for allowing me to sit in on the training workshop last night. I found it very beneficial and you were very informative. It is great to have the resources for reference."*

**Development Worker, Cork City Childcare**

*"Thanks a million – feedback was fab"*

**CIS Development Manager**

# MEMBERSHIP

**Treoir will work to increase the membership and participation of members in policy formation, awareness raising events and the overall development of the organisation**

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Treoir has a wide and diverse membership base that includes specialist agencies, maternity hospitals, adoption services, community groups and self-help groups. Our membership is fundamental in shaping the work, policies and strategies of Treoir. In turn, we offer a wide range of supports and services to our members.

Many of our members provide services for unmarried parents and their children and work closely with parents themselves. Such engagement enables Treoir to identify issues and concerns through our members which feeds directly into our service development, particularly our policy work.

In 2019, Treoir received funding from Pobal for the further development of our membership base. An expansion of membership will enable Treoir to reach a greater number of services in communities nationwide. Members can showcase their own services, network with similar organisations, share good practices, identify key issues and contribute to policy development through Treoir.

An example of where our model of engagement worked well could be seen in 2019 as members raised concerns regarding the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme which was announced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in April. Childcare service providers and parent groups were particularly engaged in the process of gathering issues and in particular the impact of the new childcare arrangements on single parent families on low incomes, which were fed to our policy officer who took the necessary steps to highlight the issues. Treoir will monitor the impact of the new childcare scheme and engage with policy work where appropriate.

In 2019, Treoir membership base grew by 25%, adding new members: SPARK, Rainbows Ireland, An Cosán, From Lads to Dads and Men's Aid (formerly AnyMan). Representatives from SPARK and From Lads to Dads are now Council members, and participate on sub-committees.

Treoir's Membership Officer will continue to grow our membership and provide opportunities for members to network and engage in Treoir's strategic priorities going forward.

# POLICY DEVELOPMENT / RESEARCH

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

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Treoir advocated on behalf of unmarried parents and their children in 2019 by influencing legislation, making submissions, and developing policy programmes informed by outreach work, our member organisations and queries from our National Specialist Information Service. Treoir continues to promote the rights of children to have a relationship with both parents where possible.

The past twelve months have been busy on the policy front and highlight the dynamic nature of family law in Ireland. This is perhaps best exemplified by the hearings in February and March 2019 of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality into Reform of the Family Law System. Treoir was invited to participate in the oral hearings and to make a written submission to the Committee. In keeping with our ethos and policy position Treoir CEO Damien Peelo, and Chairperson Dr Ruth Barrington, called for equality of guardianship for unmarried fathers, resourcing of family mediation services, reform of the legal aid system, investment in shared parenting and reform of the family courts so that they are fit for purpose.

The Joint Committee launched its report on 24 October 2019 in Leinster House. The report called for a major overhaul of the state's family law system, giving urgent priority to promised legislation for the establishment of a dedicated and integrated Family Court within existing court structures. The Committee also urged the Government to provide funding for a purpose-built Family Court complex in Dublin and the modernisation of Family Court facilities nationwide. Importantly, it recommended members of the judiciary, lawyers and court staff receive comprehensive specialist training in family law issues.

The Report made thirty-eight recommendations and the Justice Committee was of the view that while some progress had been made in reform of the system, much more needed to be done. The Committee recommended reforms with particular emphasis on the Family Court structure, transparency, access to legal aid, the voice of the child, mediation and specialisation. Treoir's key recommendations for equality of guardianship rights for unmarried fathers, a public information campaign, and properly resourced family mediation service were all accepted by the Oireachtas Committee. A link to the Oireachtas Report on Reform of the Family Law System can be found on Treoir's website.

Other important policy work during 2019 concerned the implementation of the National Childcare Scheme. As part of this work we attended Pobal workshops and met with officials who designed the Scheme from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It is very clear that our member organisations continue to have serious reservations about the Scheme and that they are particularly concerned about the impact it will have on the ability of lone parents to access the labour market.. Treoir will continue to advocate for a publicly funded national childcare scheme that is universally available to all and prioritises the needs of children.

During 2019 Treoir actively worked in collaboration with others, be they government departments, NGO's and round-table working groups. For example, as members of the Community Platform we made a valuable contribution to its election manifestos for EU, local and general election. We



attended regular briefings by the Department of Social Protection with whom we have a good relationship and events to do with family law at the Law Society, FLAC, and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. We also attended regular meetings of the Family Court Users Group and have been invited to join the Legal Aid Board's working group on reform of the legal aid system. In May we attended Tusla's annual parenting conference and Flac's conference in Trinity College on reform of Ireland's legal aid system.

The past twelve months have seen important advances in terms of outreach and membership development. Continued growth in this area is of critical importance as it informs our policy work and increases Treoir's profile amongst unmarried parents and policy makers. The success of the Pobal funding application in May 2019 facilitated this work as did the receipt of funding from the Department of Social Protection as part of the United Nations Anti-Poverty initiative.

Treoir participated in the pre-budget forum of the Department of Employment And Social Protection following our pre-budget submission. This is an important forum for NGO's to work with colleagues in the Department on targeting supports for unmarried parents.

Engaging with the community is vitally important as is hearing the views and concerns of diverse audiences about existing and impending legislation influences our policy work. On that front, we are very much aware of the concerns of LGBTI+ community concerning the enactment of legislation in the coming weeks on donor assisted procedures (Children and Family Relationships Act 2015) and regularly attend their meetings on the issues. Going forward we will be monitoring the progress of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 and other legislation, be it in relation to social welfare, housing, and family law that may impact the rights and material wellbeing of unmarried parents and their children.

In 2017, the Programme for Government contained a commitment to prepare a report of barriers to lone parents accessing higher education. A report was published in August 2017, '*An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education and to Examine Measures to Increase Participation*' which contained recommendations on increasing participation in higher education for lone parents. Following this review, the Department of Education and Skills convened a cross-departmental group to oversee the review and recommendations and invited Treoir to participate. In 2019 Treoir attended the Lone Parents Steering Group to provide information and recommendations based on the lived experiences of lone parents. To date, we have highlighted various concerns around 'returning to education access programmes' where parents do not qualify for financial supports, childcare issues, particularly for part-time evening courses, unpaid intern programmes, work experience issues and other barriers such as access to institutions and career prospects. Treoir will continue to engage with the DES, and explore ways to develop our information service to promote access to higher education for lone parents.

# TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

## Treoir will co-ordinate the Teen Parents Support Programme

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During 2019 Treoir contributed to this Strategic Priority mainly through the post of National Coordinator of the Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP). 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 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 2019, the TPSP supported 729 young parents, their children and families.

During 2019, 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 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
- continuing discussions with Tusla and TPSP staff regarding the administration of the School Completion Programme (SCP)
- supporting TPSP projects with the recruitment and induction of new staff
- maintaining the TPSP website.

## TPSP Meetings

To ensure cohesion and the flow of communication among all strands of the TPSP structure, in 2019 the National Coordinator organised two separate meetings each for the TPSP Employing Organisations, the TPSP National Advisory Committee and for all TPSP project staff. The Coordinator followed up issues raised at these meetings such as childcare, housing, the School Completion Programme, and aspects of the Supplementary Welfare system.

In line with the Youth Participation Strategy, in 2019 two young mothers joined the TPSP National Advisory Committee. One of these young parents is a former TPSP service user currently in third level education and the other young mother is a current service user in secondary school.

## 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 2019, the National Coordinator made a Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP) and the TPSP also made inputs to the HSE's Working Group for the The Maternity Hospital Patient Experience Survey 2019/2020.

During 2019 the National Coordinator represented the needs of young parents on groups such as:

- The Irish Coalition to end Youth Homelessness
- A Working Group in relation to NCCA's Review of RSE in schools
- The Parenting Network
- The HSE's Maternity Service Users Advisory Group.

Attendance at meetings of the HSE's Maternity Service Users Advisory Group was shared between the National Coordinator and Trish Hurley, TPSP Project Worker, Cork.

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

- The Tusla Parenting Conference
- The HEA Access Forum
- Focus Ireland's Annual Conference entitled 'Ending Youth Homelessness'.
- A Customer Representative Forum organised by DEASP
- A consultation on the new Youth Justice Strategy jointly organised by the Children's Rights Alliance and the National Youth Council of Ireland
- The launch of its Report Card 2019 by the Children's Rights Alliance and
- The biennial conference of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre entitled 'Family Support Now and in the Future'.

In terms of outcomes, in 2019 DEASP changed the eligibility conditions attached to the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) for young parents who are in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment (OFP) and aged between 18 and 21 years of age. Previously these young parents had to be out of education for 2 years to qualify for BTEA compared to 3 or 9 months for older OFP recipients, depending on the course they were undertaking. For young parents, a break from education for two years could be demotivating and have the effect of their not returning to

education at all. The eligibility conditions for these young parents have now been brought into line with young people in receipt of Disability Allowance. This means that young parents under 21 years of age and returning to second level education are eligible for BTEA if they have been out of education for 3 months and those returning to third level education are eligible for BTEA if they have been out of education for 9 months. This change is the direct result of this issue being highlighted in several Pre-budget Submissions made by the TPSP and ongoing follow up with government officials in DEASP.

In relation to the HSE's Maternity Hospital Patient Experience Survey 2019/2020, the TPSP advocated for the inclusion of mothers under 16 years of age in this Survey. Ethical approval to include mothers under 16 years of age was not received in time for the 2019 Survey. However, the HSE intends to include mothers under 16 years of age in future Surveys.

## **Young Parents and Housing**

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

In June 2019 the TPSP conducted a Census which captured all its service users with a serious housing need. The census used the ETHOS<sup>[1]</sup> the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless.

[\[1\] typology used by FEANTSA.](#)

This typology divides those with a housing need into Roofless, Houseless, Insecure and Inadequate. The Census found that 18% of young parents supported in 2019 had a housing need, i.e.: 128 young parents consisting of 125 mothers and 3 fathers. This includes 2 young mothers who were sleeping rough and 20 young mothers who were in homeless accommodation. This data is used to inform discussions on youth homelessness particularly in relation to the needs of young parents who are sleeping rough or who are in homeless accommodation without their children.

## **Reporting to Tusla**

In 2019 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 2019, the TPSP organised 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, this Workshop has been completed by 74 professionals working with young fathers.

In 2019, the TPSP also organized a Workshop based on *The TPSP Toolkit*. The development of *The TPSP Toolkit* was funded by the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme. The Toolkit brings together in one resource manual, the knowledge, skills and experience of TPSP staff focusing on what are the unique needs of teen parents. This was the 13th Toolkit Workshop organised by TPSP bringing to 191 the number of professionals working in non-TPSP areas who have participated. 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 2019 the National Co-ordinator gave an input on supporting teen parents to the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinators for Co. Kildare. These coordinators are employed by the Department of Education and Skills.

### **Training for TPSP staff**

Part of the role of the TPSP National Coordinator is to respond to training needs identified by TPSP staff. In September 2019 TPSP staff received a briefing on Signs of Safety from Debbie O'Shea who is Tusla's Signs of Safety Practice & Implementation Lead. Signs of Safety is an approach to child protection casework used by Tusla. The briefing received by TPSP staff will support their engagement at Tusla Child Protection and other case conferences.

### **Responding to queries**

The TPSP National Coordinator acts as a source of information, advice, guidance and referral to other supports for pregnant and parenting teens, their families and professionals in areas where there is not a TPSP. During 2019 she also delivered an Information Session on teen pregnancy to a Leaving Certificate Applied class in West Dublin.

### **TPSP Website**

During 2019, the TPSP website ([www.tpsp.ie](http://www.tpsp.ie)) was updated regularly with items of interest to young parents and those involved with them. In 2019, the Home Page of TPSP website was viewed 27,400. A total of 19793 other pages were viewed. The pages on Where to Find a TPSP, Support and fathers were the most frequently viewed, in that order.

### **Chairperson of the TPSP National Advisory Committee**

During 2019 Rosemary Grant resigned as Chairperson of the TPSP National Advisory Committee. Rosemary was the Principal Social Worker in the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital. The National Coordinator and staff in the 11 TPSP projects would like to take this opportunity to thank Rosemary for her support and immense contribution to the TPSP over the past 20 years.

# RAISING AWARENESS / PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

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## Awareness through connections

Treoir has 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 information and updates involving policy development, our services, social welfare entitlements, advertising our specialist phone services and many other items of relevance. Throughout 2019 Treoir has increased its audience through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which has significantly increased our reach. We extended our social media platform in 2019 by including Instagram in responding to the changing demographic, more specifically, reaching younger parents and organisations working with younger parents and their children.

## Social Media

Treoir's social media platform includes Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where we highlight topical issues, advertise our services and connect with parents through messaging facilities. Social media is also used to connect with our membership and the wider charity sector and community services. This platform has proven very effective in raising awareness around issues affecting unmarried parents, their families and those working with them. Treoir has 4,800 likes and followers, a significant increase on 2018 figures.

## What It Says In The Papers

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 four e-bulletins produced and circulated in 2019. We added a 'Members' section on our e-Bulletin to facilitate the promotion of services our members offer within their community. This was added to encourage links and networking and has been well received by our members throughout 2019.

## AGM 2019 – Family Law – A case for reform and review of cohabitation legislation

Treoir was delighted to invite Helen Coughlan as our keynote speaker to our AGM in 2019. Helen Coughlan is a practicing Solicitor and Vice Chair of the Law Society of Ireland's Family and Child Law Committee. Her presentation on 'Family Law – the case for reform and a review of

cohabitation legislation’ explored the current state of the Family Law system. Some of the challenges Helen highlighted related to delays in obtaining court dates due to increasing applications made by parents for Guardianship, Access/Custody and Child Maintenance hearings, especially where Judges order adjournments if they require further information or section reports. Other issues relate to unsuitable facilities and lack of available qualified professionals in carrying out child psychology reports where a child’s view needs to be obtained.

Helen also discussed issues around access to legal representatives in court for parents, citing this as a huge concern and could be addressed by resourcing family mediation services. Helen suggests that the reform of family law is long overdue and is hurting our most vulnerable children. Helen went on to highlight legal issues for cohabiting couples following relationship breakdown, suggesting that there are significant challenges and really highlighting the importance of cohabiting couples drawing up a ‘Cohabitants agreement’, similar to a pre-nuptial agreement, especially when they have children and purchase property together.

Much of Helen’s presentation is in-line with Treoir position of the reform of family law which we submitted to the Oireachtas Committee on Reform of Family Law in 2019. A copy of Helen’s address can be found on our website, [here](#), along with our submission to the Oireachtas Committee which can be found on our website [here](#).

The talk was well attended with panel discussions and Helen’s keynote speech was covered by news media.



Image 4: Helen Coughlan as our keynote speaker to our AGM in 2019. Helen Coughlan is a practicing Solicitor and Vice Chair of the Law Society of Ireland’s Family and Child Law Committee – keynote speech at AGM 2019 (2019) (Photo by Sam Dunne)

### **Helen Coughlan’s address**

<https://www.treoir.ie/2019/06/04/family-law-the-case-for-reform-and-a-review-of-cohabitation-legislation-by-helen-coughlan/>

### **Treoir submission**

<https://www.treoir.ie/2019/03/08/treoirs-submission-to-oireachtas-committee-on-justice-and-equality-for-family-law-reform/>

### **Irish Examiner Article**

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/family-law-system-broken-and-failing-parents-and-kids-927210.html>

**Connecting with our community**



## Tallaght Fair

Treoir had an information stand at the Tallaght Fair, an annual information event held in West Tallaght. This year's event was held in the Fettercairn Youth and Community Project in September. The Fair is an important event in our calendar as it targets one of Treoir key target groups.

## UN Eradication of Poverty October 2019

Treoir received funding from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to carry out a poverty related community event during 2019 UN Eradication of Poverty week October 2019. Our project was themed around 'Access to Justice', where we developed an infographic containing information on aspects of family law. During eradication of poverty week, Treoir's information team reached out to the community by setting up information stands in Ballyfermot, Tallaght, Ballymun and Dublin's city centre. The stands were well attended, where specialist information was provided to parents/guardians, practitioners and grandparents by Information Officers on a one-to-one basis.



Images: Mary Roche - Ballymun Civic Centre Information Stand During UN Eradication of Poverty Week October 2019 (2019) - Sam Dunne – UN Eradication of Poverty Event information stand – Tallaght Library and DCC Library (Photos by Sam Dunne)

## Kinship Care Ireland

In 2019, the Council of Treoir agreed to support the emergence of a new organisation that works with kinship carers. Kinship Care Ireland (KCI) is a body made up of kinship carers, individuals who have care experience, and organisations who have a remit for and experience of working with families and kinship carers.

Kinship care is the full-time parenting of children by grandparents, older siblings, aunts and uncles, other relatives or friends of the family. Kinship care occurs for many reasons including, death of a parent, parental substance misuse, abandonment, illness or imprisonment.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> November KCI held its inaugural meeting with Kinship carers in Dublin. The meeting examined the key issues for kinship carers and the need for a national body like KCI to advocate on their behalf.



Treoir will continue to provide governance and administrative support to KCI and to support the implementation of its strategic goals.



Image 7 & 8: Opening Kinship Care Ireland Event & workshops (2019) Sam Dunne

### From Lads to Dads Launch 2019

From Lads to Dads is a new initiative set up to support fathers and expectant fathers in becoming parents. Dave Saunders, a Tallaght local, founded FLTD's following his own experiences in becoming a young father. Recognising that there is a deficit in supports for fathers in general, Dave began exploring ways to bridge this gap in services.

In November 2019, From Lads To Dad was launched with a view to developing a plan to set-up community supports groups to offer safe spaces for fathers and expectant fathers to get peer support in their pathway to parenthood.

Treoir offered their support and experience in aiding FLTDs and FLTDs are not only members of Treoir, but Dave Saunders was also elected as a council member at Treoir 2019 AGM. We will continue to support FLTDs and look forward to working with them into the future as they develop their organisation and grow.



Image: 9 & 10 FLTDs launch November & Cllr and Mayor of SDCC Vicker Casserly (2019 Sam Dunne)

### **Treoir Information Points at District Court of Family, Dolphin House**

Information stands at Dolphin House Family Law District Court are constantly stocked by Treoir staff members and are available for parents in the waiting areas and other locations in the building.



Image 11: Treoir Information Points at District Court of Family, Dolphin House (2019) Sam Dunne

### **Wexford Parents Hub – Launch**

Barnardo's and TUSLA recognised the need to create a 'hub' of family services in communities to act as a self-referral service for parents and practitioners. Treoir was invited to the launch. Council member, Cathy McCurdy, played a central role within her team at Barnardos, Enniscorthy, in establishing Wexford Parents Hub, which is a Facebook Group that can be accessed by anyone in the locality. Organisations within this hub are family resource centres, childcare organisations, medical services and much more.

### **AnyMan Launch**

AnyMan (formerly AMEN) became members of Treoir during 2019. They are now known as Men's Aid Ireland who offer support, information and guidance to men experiencing domestic abuse. Treoir attended the launch. Speakers included the CEO of Men's Health Ireland who spoke about how a focus on Men's mental health could be a positive preventative intervention in dealing with domestic abuse experienced by men. AnyMan has since rebranded to form Men's Aid Ireland.



Image 13: Launch of AnyMan (Men's Aid) Event 2019 (20129) Sam Dunne

# GOVERNANCE

## Governance, Accountability and Transparency

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Treoir is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance, accountability and transparency vis-a-vis members, funders and the public. Governance, accountability and transparency are shared responsibilities between the Council and the CEO. The Council has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with applicable governance standards and best practices and the CEO is responsible for ensuring that the necessary procedures, practices and protocols are in place and followed at all operational levels of the organisation.

During 2019 the Council developed a 5 year Strategic Plan that outlines the goals for Treoir until 2023 and have put in place targets that will ensure that the organisation is fully compliant with all legislation and the Charities Code.

Treoir was randomly selected by the HSE for an external audit for the year 2017 that was carried out in 2019. The audit examined not only Treoir's financial management and policies and procedures but the governance of the organisation. We were delighted with the outcome of the audit which recognised the exceptional work of the Council and staff in implementing sound governance practices. There were some recommendations by the auditor to improve accountability and they have been implemented with immediate effect.

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**. Towards the end of 2019 the Council set up a **Policy Sub-Committee** to advance key strategic policies for the organisation.

### Finance and Audit Committee:

This committee met 3 times during 2019. This Sub-Committee's work included:

- Formulating the 2019 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 Policy

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

### HR Sub Committee

This sub-committee met three times during 2019. The work of the sub-committee included:

- Updating Treoir's remuneration policy and salary scales
- 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 (resigned during 2019), Patricia O'Donovan and Ciara McKenna.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

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**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 2019**

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

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019**

		Restricted Funds 2019 €	Unrestricted Funds 2019 €	Total 2019 €	Total 2018 €
	Notes				
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
Other Income	3	19,000	22,188	41,188	20,353
Charitable activities	3	445,452	-	445,452	430,310
<b>Total incoming resources</b>		464,452	22,188	486,640	450,662
<b>Resources expended</b>					
Raising funds		-	-	-	-
Charitable activities	4	(432,215)	(10,661)	(442,876)	(426,089)
<b>Total resources expended</b>		(432,215)	(10,661)	(442,876)	(426,089)
<b>Net surplus for the financial year</b>	5	32,237	11,527	43,764	24,573

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

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

**AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019**

	Notes	2019 €	€	2018 €	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Intangible assets	8		2,047		3,526
Tangible assets	9		16,535		14,772
			<hr/>		<hr/>
			18,582		18,298
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	11	12,402		17,968	
Cash at bank and in hand		158,395		95,628	
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
		170,797		113,596	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	12	(67,610)		(53,889)	
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Net current assets</b>			103,187		59,707
			<hr/>		<hr/>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			121,769		78,005
			<hr/>		<hr/>
<b>Reserves</b>					
Restricted funds	15	38,070		5,834	
Unrestricted funds	15	83,699		72,171	
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Members' funds</b>			121,769		78,005
			<hr/>		<hr/>

The financial statements were approved by the board of directors and authorised for issue on 31 March 2020 and are signed on its behalf by:

Ruth Barrington  
**Director**

Deirdre Pemberton  
**Director**

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

## DETAILED TRADING AND INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019**

	2019	2018
	€	€
<b>Income</b>		
HSE Dublin CH09	225,723	225,725
Tusla	22,184	22,184
HSE Crisis Pregnancy Prog	148,000	148,000
Membership fees	1,300	910
Citizens Information Board	34,400	34,400
Lottery Funding	8,000	-
Rental Income	8,486	2,550
Other Income	9,672	16,893
POBAL	15,145	-
Kinship Care	11,000	-
DEASP	2,730	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	486,640	450,662
<b>Administrative expenses</b>	(442,876)	(426,088)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Operating surplus</b>	43,764	24,574
	<hr/>	<hr/>

## 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 Helen Coughlan from the Law Library for addressing our AGM and Conference in 2019 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.

A very special thank you to Rosemary Grant who chaired the National Advisory Committee of the Teen Parents Support Programme with great enthusiasm during 2019. Rosemary retired from her post with the Coombe Hospital and stepped down as chair of the NAC. We thank her sincerely for the contribution she made to Teen Parents and we wish her every best wish in her retirement.

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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