



# Annual Report 2020



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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
  - and Kinship carers
- 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  
Marian Barnard, Secretary, Anew  
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  
 Rosemary Grant, Independent Member  
 Lorraine Barry, Ringsend Irishtown Family Resource Centre  
 Evelyn Mahon, Independent Member

Deirdre Pemberton Here2help - Stepped down May 2020  
 Ciara McKenna – National Maternity Hospital Holles St. - Stepped down in May 2020

## TREOIR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

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

## HONORARY MEMBERS

Gemma Rowley      Honorary Life Member  
 Margret Dromey      Honary 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  
 Emma Byrne McNamee – Kinship Care Ireland Co-ordinator (Joined December 2020)



## MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON

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The past year was one of unprecedented challenge for Treoir, as for so many other organisations. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the imposition of public health measures to control the spread of the virus raised the question of whether Treoir could continue to provide its information service and other supports for single parents and their children. Thanks to the commitment, agility and adaptability of its team, Treoir continued to offer advice and guidance over the phone and through its website, with staff working remotely from home. As this report shows, Treoir's staff handled more calls and queries in 2020 than in 2019, despite the very different working conditions. Information workshops moved online, and social media activity expanded. A similar approach was taken to carrying out Treoir's other responsibilities, such as the coordination of the Teen Parents Support Programme, its policy and advocacy role and the development of the shared parenting and mediation project. Treoir's commitment to support Kinship Care Ireland was also met. The Board and its committees met as scheduled throughout the year by Zoom and continued to provide governance and oversight of the organisation.

The pandemic threw up new issues for single parents that Treoir helped to resolve or at least to highlight during the year. Treoir was instrumental in clarifying the status of access and custody arrangements for children during the lockdown restrictions and constantly drew attention to the impact on parents of the closure of the family law courts to all cases, with the exception of those involving domestic abuse. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of Treoir's staff to maintaining services throughout the year and thank them for their commitment to the welfare of unmarried parents and their children. My particular thanks to our CEO, Damien Peelo, for his leadership of the organisation during this difficult time.

Treoir is grateful to our funders – HSE, Tusla, Pobal, Citizens' Information Board – for their continued support for our mission. The Council was particularly pleased to respond to the request from Tusla to take responsibility for funding the School Completion Programme in 2020 as part of its coordination of the Teenage Pregnancy Support Programme. This farsighted programme supports young people in their role as parents and encourages them to complete their education.

My thanks to the Council of Treoir for their engagement and commitment throughout a challenging year. We were sorry to lose Deidre Pemberton and Ciara McKenna as members of the Council but were pleased to welcome Lorraine Barry and Evelyn Mahon as new members. The Council was particularly pleased to appoint, Margaret Dromey, Treoir's first Chief Executive Officer, as an honorary life member of Treoir in recognition of the extraordinary contribution she made during her career to developing the organisation and to improving the lives of unmarried parents and their children.

Dr Ruth Barrington

## A NOTE FROM THE CEO

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When we look back at 2020, we can be very proud of the work of Treoir. Despite the challenges of the global pandemic, the team continued to adapt and effectively respond to the needs of the families we work with. This report provides highlights from all of our work and documents the continuing issues that many unmarried families face.

Recognising the impact that the pandemic was having on family life for many unmarried parents Treoir put in place a number of supports. Firstly, we extended the operational hours of our National Information Service to open on weekends and bank holidays to support the families we work with.

Next, we addressed the direct impact that some of the government public health measures were having on families. Some families struggled to adhere to access and custody while observing the 5 km travel restriction. This resulted in some parents not getting access to their children. Treoir, working with the Department of Justice and the Courts Services sought clarification and requested that parents adhering to court orders could travel beyond the 5 km restrictions to collect their children. The government clarified that children could move between their homes and that childcare was a legitimate reason to travel beyond the 5 km restriction.

Finally, the pandemic forced us to work in new ways working remotely using technology. Treoir took advantage of the increased accessibility to online platforms to bring members together for policy discussions online. This proved to be very popular and something that we will continue to utilise into the future.

Major strides were made in two key strategic areas of work, mediation and shared parenting. During 2020 we developed a very exciting pilot project “Let’s work it out” with Dublin Community Mediation. This project brings together the skills of mediation and conflict resolution to deliver a shared parenting arrangement in the best interest of children. The project works with parents no longer cohabiting either at an individual level or together to improve communication and move towards a meaningful shared parenting arrangement in the best interests of their child.

I am delighted to welcome Emma Byrne-McNamee as the newest member of Treoir’s staff team. Treoir agreed to host Kinship Care Ireland and provide it with the legal status and infrastructure to enable it to develop and deliver services for kinship carers and their families across Ireland. Emma joined the Treoir team in December 2020 as the National Co-ordinator of Kinship Care Ireland.

Finally, I would like to thank the Council of Treoir for their hard work and dedication throughout the year and their willingness to work remotely to provide governance and support to the organisation. Without their voluntary contribution Treoir could not function. Thank you for your dedication.

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 for them.**

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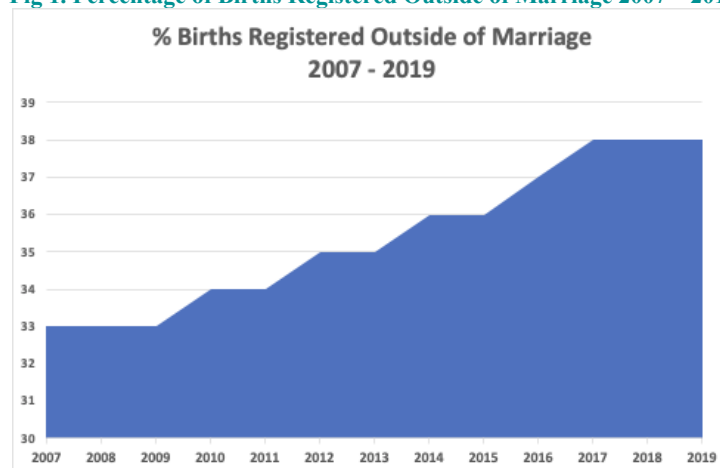
The National Specialist Information Service continues to be a core part of Treoir's service provision. Treoir promotes the service nationwide through online advertisement, social media, our publications, posters in libraries, health centres, community centres, and by word of mouth. The high volume of 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 2020, 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/civil partnerships in 2019 according to the Central Statistics Office vital statistics report 2019 (CSO, 2019) as set out in fig. 1 below. Annual statistics are currently unavailable for 2020, however, CSO vital statistics report in quarter 3 of 2020 shows that 39.3% of births were outside marriage/civil partnerships. These statistics illustrate an increasing trend of births outside of marriage/civil partnerships over a 12 year period.

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

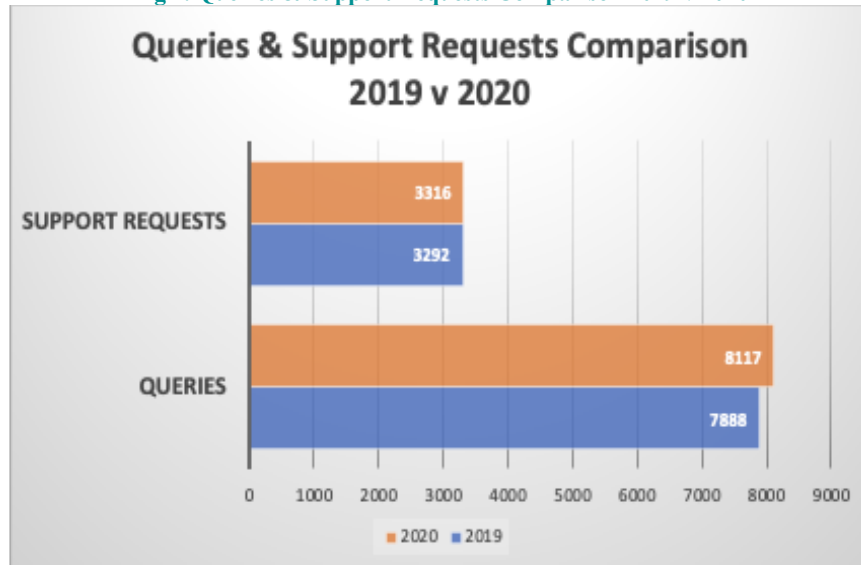
**Fig 1. Percentage of Births Registered Outside of Marriage 2007 – 2019**



### A. SUPPORT REQUESTS TO THE NATIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE

Treoir's National Specialist Information Service dealt with **8,117** queries in 2020 logged against **3,316** Support Calls. As shown in fig 2. below, there has been an **increase of 229** on queries recorded in 2019. Callers often have more than one query which accounts for the difference between the number of enquiries and actual calls. The average support requests to queries ratio is approximately 1:2.5, accounting for the complexity of informational support required by clients.

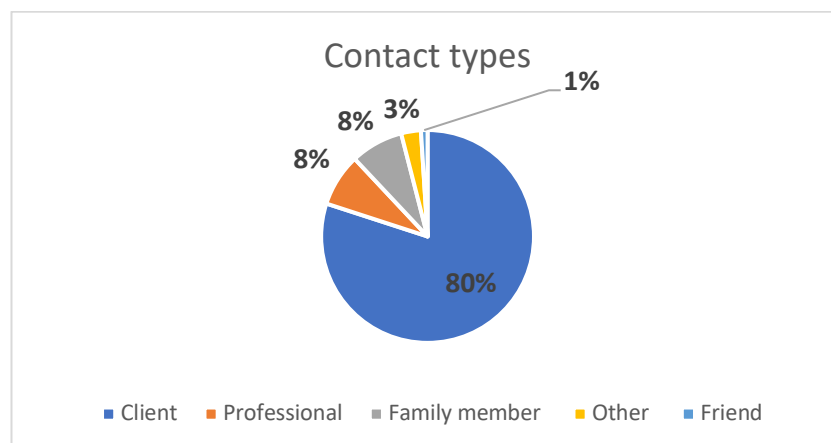
Fig 2. Queries & Support Requests Comparison 2019 v 2020



## 1. CONTACT TYPE BY CALLS

The majority of calls received in 2020 were from parents/clients (80%) with ‘unmarried mothers’ accounting for 1,301 (39.2%) of individual support requests with 3,220 (39.7) queries. This is followed closely by ‘unmarried fathers’ accounting for 1,259 (38.8%) individual support requests with 3,322 (41.3%) queries. Treoir continues to support a high number of professionals who use the information service for support, with 8% of all calls coming from professionals. The remaining 12% of other callers include family members, friends, adult children, LGBTQI+, media, students, and others as illustrated in fig 3 below.

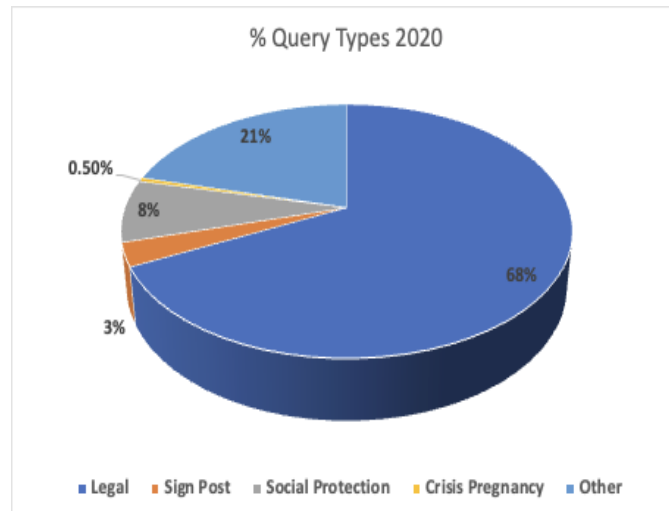
Fig 3. Percentage of Support Requests by Contact Type 2020



## 2. TYPES OF QUERIES

The majority of queries dealt with in 2020 were categorized as **Legal (68%)**, **Other (21%)**, **Social Protection (8%)**, and **Sign-posts** (referrals to other services).

Fig 4. Types of Queries % 2020

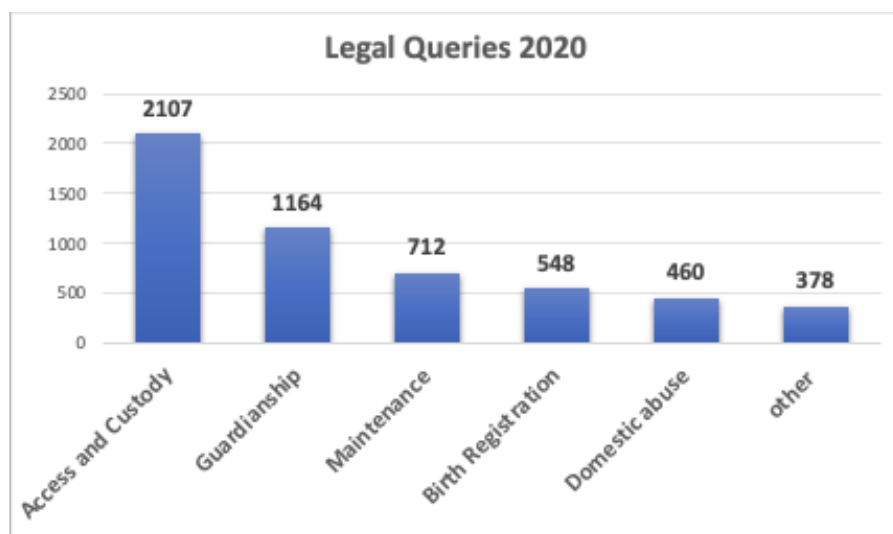


A breakdown of the category ‘other’ dealt with queries in relation to Parenting (506), Mediation (171), Housing (123), Counselling (60) and other access issues (25).

## 2.1 Legal Queries

Legal queries feature as the highest percentage of queries dealt with in 2020, a similar pattern to recent years.

Fig 5. Legal Queries 2020



Out of a sample of 5,369 legal queries 40% related to **Access and Custody**, 22% concerned **Guardianship**, followed by **Maintenance** at 13%, **Birth Registration** at 10%, **Domestic Abuse** at 9%, and **other legal queries** at 7%.

As illustrated in fig 5. **Access and Custody** is the most frequent legal query we received in 2020, which is a change from previous years where Guardianship queries were most frequent. This change can be linked to shared parenting issues which arose during COVID19 lockdown. In March 2020, COVID19 was added to our database to capture the increasing number of calls to Treoir’s service in relation to access and custody, and maintenance issues where COVID19 travel restrictions and unemployment was a direct issue. **We recorded 507 COVID19** related legal issues, which is 30% of all ‘Other Legal Queries’. Of the 507 legal queries relating to COVID19, 430 came from parents directly, with 237 (55%) from fathers and 193 (45%) from mothers.

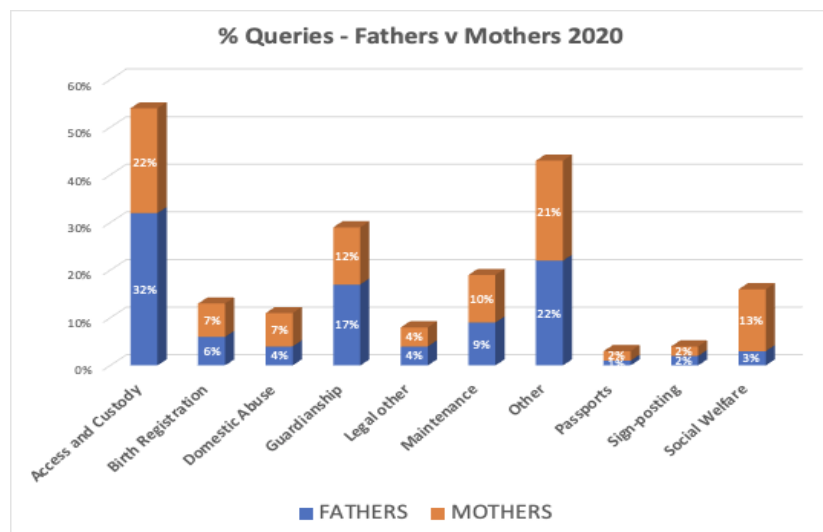
## 2.3 Parents' Legal Queries

Out of the total 8117 queries recorded in 2020, 6542 were from parents, with fathers and mothers accounting for 3322, and 3220 queries respectively. Parents frequently require information regarding family law. As illustrated in fig 7, access and custody were the most frequent query for both parents with fathers accounting for 32% of calls in this category and mothers accounting for 22%. The frequency of calls regarding access and custody could be attributed to the COVID19 restrictions as many parents struggled to maintain access arrangements due to travel restrictions and social distancing guidelines. Information about Guardianship is the second most frequent query, with fathers accounting for 17% and mothers accounting for 12% of queries. 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. Treoir continued to advocate for a Register of Guardianship during 2020 and for equal rights and responsibilities for unmarried fathers to the guardianship of their children.

Treoir recorded a high number of queries relating to social protection, with mothers accounting for 13% of these calls and fathers just 3%. These figures correlate with well published data on one-parent families headed by mothers living in deprivation, poverty and consistent poverty.

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

Fig 6. Fathers and Mothers Query Types 2020



## 2.4 Social Protection Queries

Social Protection queries made up 6% (475) of all queries to the Treoir Specialist Information Service in 2020. Most queries related to one-parent family payments. A further breakdown and comparison of frequent social protection queries presents interesting findings about the type of queries made by mothers compared to fathers. Mothers primarily seek information about the one-parent family payment support, whereas father's seek information in relation to child benefit, jobseekers' benefit/allowance and housing support. A small number of social welfare queries relate to cohabiting parents. Social protection queries from professionals represent 8% of calls, which may account for the complex nature of supports for unmarried parents given the variety available, and the means test process.

## 2.5 Other Queries

Twenty percent of all calls fall into the ‘other’ category. Within this category, **Shared Parenting** was the most frequently reported query. Out of a sample of 1,650 ‘other’ queries: 35% related to **Shared Parenting**, followed by **COVID19** at 32%, **Mediation** at 10%. Queries relating to child protection and counselling make up some of the other queries in this category.

## 3. REFERRALS/SIGNPOSTS

Treoir’s Information Officers often refer/sign-post callers to appropriate services based on further supports and information that clients may require. Out of a sample of 218 referrals/sign-posts, **22%** of referrals were to One Family and **10%** to Mediation services. **20%** of calls were to ‘other’ services illustrating the complexity of supports required by our callers. 8% of callers were referred to the Legal Aid Board, 6% of client referrals were to Women’s Aid or other domestic abuse services, and 6% were referred to FLAC. Other referrals include local authorities, INTREO services, TUSLA, counselling, Men’s Aid and other family support services.

## 4. PARENTS PROFILE

The majority of clients using our Information Service are **parents**, accounting for 2,560 callers, with mother and fathers accounting for 50% each respectively.

### 4.1 Accommodation Type

Fig 7. Accommodation Type Fathers and Mothers

	Fathers		%	Mothers		%
Other	411	33		415	32	
At home with Parents	251	20		209	16	
Direct Provision	3	0		5	0	
Emergency Accommodation	6	0		4	0	
Family Hub	2	0		1	0	
HAP	29	2		108	8	
Homeless	15	1		5	0	
Homeowner	232	18		166	13	
In Partners' Parent's Home	5	0		3	0	
In Partners Home	16	1		25	2	
Local Authority	40	3		125	10	
Owns council property	2	0		3	0	
Prison	7	1		0	0	
Private Rented	227	18		191	15	
RAS	1	0		12	1	
Residential Care Accommodation	0	0		2	0	
Sheltered Accommodation	2	0		2	0	
Traveller Specific Accommodation	1	0		1	0	
Women's Refuge	0	0		5	0	
Unknown	8	1		17	1	
Focus Ireland	1	0		2	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1259</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>1301</b>	<b>100</b>	

Out of 2,560 parents who contacted Treoir, **1,709** provided specific details of their accommodation type. Out of that sample, **398** are homeowners, **170** are in local authority housing, **418** are in private rented accommodation, **137** are receipt of housing assistance payment, **460** are

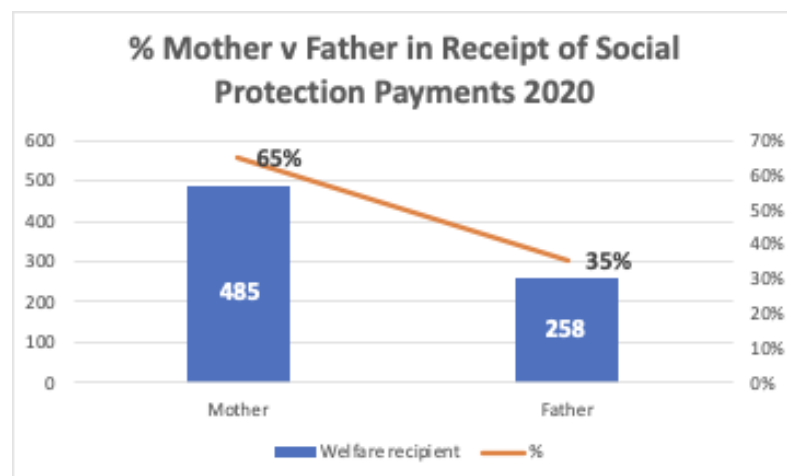
at home with parents. The remaining parents are in a variety of some form of supported or temporary accommodation such as direct provision, family hubs, emergency accommodation, sheltered accommodation or in refuges. Of significance given the type of accommodation recorded, **67%** of callers are in insecure, shared or temporary accommodation such as private rented homes, or living with their parents. The remaining **33%** of this sample are living in local authority housing or their own homes.

## 4.2 Income type

### 4.2.1 Social Welfare Recipient

Out of all parents who contacted the Information Service, **743** were recorded as being in receipt of some form of **Social Protection** payments, **65%** were **mothers**, and **35%** were **fathers**, which is similar to other trends in social protection queries made by mothers and indicative of the reliance on welfare supports within the lone parent cohort. This is a small sample from the overall figure of 2560 support requests from parents, as most parents do not provide information on social protection supports. However, even though this sample is relatively small, it provides an indication of the overrepresentation of lone mothers reliant upon social protection supports.

Fig 8. % Mothers v Fathers in Receipt of Social Protection Payments 2020

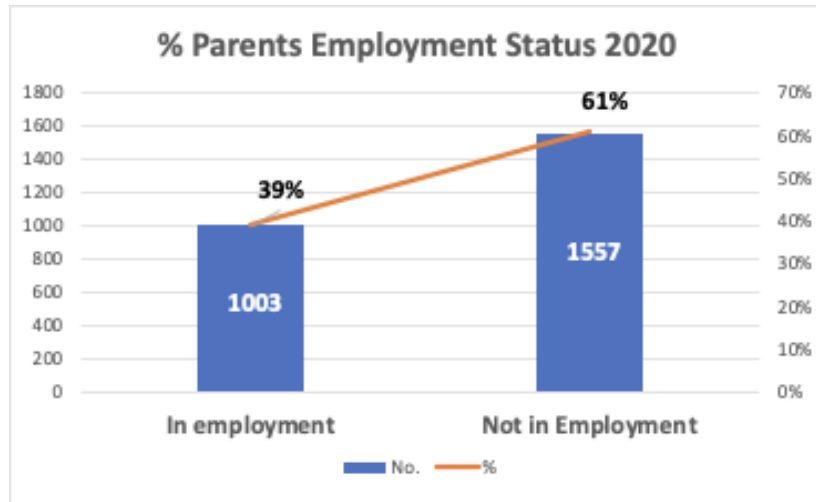


### 5.2.2 Employment Status

Out of 2,560 parents whose employment status was recorded, 1003 were recorded as being in some form of employment, while 1557 were outside of employment. A further breakdown of those in employment shows that **40% are mothers** and **60% are fathers**. However, when we take into account the percentage of mothers in receipt of social protection supports while in employment is taken into account, there is a high number of mothers (**81%**) working while in receipt of social protection in-work supports. The high number of mothers receiving in-work support confirms Treoir's view of the importance of such supports for unmarried parents.



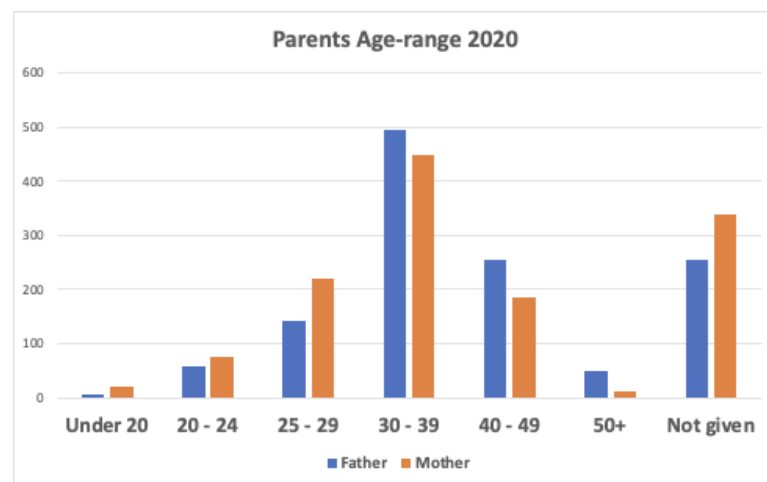
Fig 19. % Parents Employment Status 2020



### 4.2.3. Age Range

Out of 2560 parents who contacted Treoir in 2020, 1967 provided their age range. Out of that sample, the majority of parents are between the ages of **thirty and thirty-nine years of age at 48%**. The second largest percentage is between the ages of **twenty-four and twenty-nine years of age at 22%**.

Fig 10. Caller Age Range % 2020



### 4.2.5 Caller Queries by Geographical Spread

From the sample of **3316** support requests for which location details are provided, Dublin represents the largest percentage at **35%**. Cork accounts for **7%**, while Kildare and Galway represent **4%**.

## 5. 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***

#### ***Access to children during Covid-19 lockdown***

A father emailed Treoir regarding his concerns in relation to travel restrictions introduced during Covid-19. He and the mother of his child lived in different counties. He had overnight access to his child every second weekend. When the country went into lockdown in March 2020, the mother stopped his access to the child. He had not seen his child in over two months. He wanted to visit his daughter and spend a half an hour with her in her garden while maintaining a social distance. He was concerned that he that he would be stopped by the Gardai and that they would prevent him from seeing his child.

The father was informed by Treoir that Covid travel restrictions did not apply to access visits. If he were stopped by the Gardai he could explain the reason for his journey and show them the court order for access if he had one. The father was sent a copy of the Statement issued by the President of the District Court in March 2020 in relation to family law matters during Covid-19.

In his statement the President stated *"The best outcome for children is for parents to contact each other to set out their concerns and suggest ideas for practical solutions that can be put in place. The health concerns of parents, their children and the extended family need to be considered when sorting out arrangements.*

*As parents, if you agree that the arrangements set out in a court order should be temporarily varied you are free to do so. Make a note of this agreement by way of email or text message. Where a child, by agreement, does not get to spend their usual time with their parent, the court will expect that contact is established and maintained regularly. Using video technologies such as Skype, Zoom, What's App or Face-Time might help, and if that is not possible telephone conversations should be arranged. These current restrictions mean that the detail of every access order may not be full implementable, but as parents you should make every effort to allow your child to continue access in a safe, alternative way."*

The father was also sent a copy of the Law Society Guidelines in relation to Access during Covid-19.

## ***Case Study No.2***

### ***Guardianship for a family member***

A family support worker contacted Treoir looking for information for a grandmother who wanted guardianship and custody of her grandchild. The mother of the ten-year-old child had addiction problems and had abandoned the child. The child's grandmother had been caring for the child for six months. She was receiving social welfare payments for the child.

The father of the child was not involved in the child's life and had no legal rights in respect of the child. The child's mother was the sole guardian of the child.

The grandmother was looking for information on how she could apply to the court for guardianship and custody of the child.

The family support worker was informed that the grandmother was not eligible to apply to the court for guardianship as the child had been in her care for only six months. Under the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, an application for guardianship can be made by a person who has provided for the day-to-day care of the child for a continuous period of twelve months or more and where the child has no parent or guardian who is willing or able to exercise guardianship rights and responsibilities in respect of the child.

The grandmother, however, could make an application to the district court for custody of her granddaughter. Under the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, a court may make an order for custody on application by a person who is a certain relative of a child (grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, or aunts).

Before making an order for custody the court will require the consent of all guardians. However, the court may dispense with the need for consent if it is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the child to do so. Any decision made by the court will be made in the best interests of the child and the court will consider the views of the child where possible given his/her age and understanding.

The grandmother would have to wait until the child was in her care for twelve months before making an application for guardianship.

Information in relation to guardianship and custody was sent to the family support worker.

### ***Case Study No. 3***

#### ***Re-registering the birth of a child born through Donor Assisted Human Reproduction (DAHR)***

A caller contacted Treoir seeking information on the procedures required to add her name as a parent to her child's birth certificate. The child was born through donor assisted human reproduction (DAHR).

The caller's wife had given birth to the baby in 2018.

The birth of a donor-conceived child, where the procedure was performed before the 4th of May 2020 must first be registered as a non DAHR birth. The parents can apply for the birth to be re-registered as a DAHR birth. A court order naming another person as the parent of the child is required for a DAHR re- registration. An application for a Declaration of Parentage can be applied for in the District Court.

The parents can then apply for the birth to be re-registered as a DAHR birth. They can download the application form and attach a certified copy of the Declaration of Parentage to [dahr@welfare.ie](mailto:dahr@welfare.ie) or post it to DAHR Section, General Register Office.

The caller was sent information in relation re-registering the birth of a donor-conceived child.

She was also sent a link to an LGBT Ireland and FLAC site which provided support and information on family rights to LGBTI+ parents.

## **B. PUBLICATIONS**

### **1. Information Pack for Unmarried Parents**

The Information Pack for Unmarried Parents was updated in 2020. 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 the Treoir website. The Information Pack continues to be a hugely popular resource for both unmarried families and for professionals and NGO's working with families. The Information Pack is available online along with Treoir's leaflet series, which includes infographics. A new online ordering system has been added to Treoir's website [www.treoir.ie/publications](http://www.treoir.ie/publications) which allows clients and professionals to order publications directly.

### **2. Leaflets**

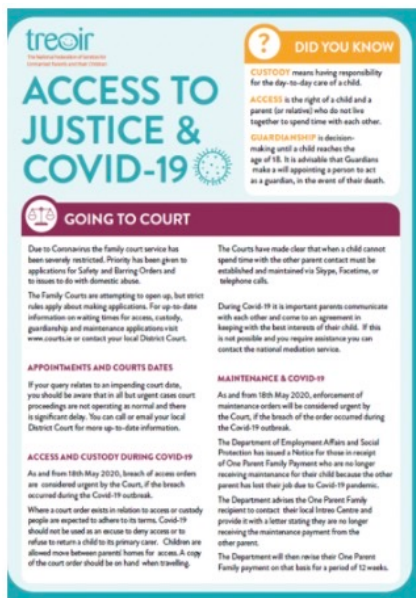
Work was undertaken in updating Treoir's information leaflet series throughout 2020. Leaflets explain in detail the changes in family law introduced by the Children and Family Relationships

Act 2015, the changes to social protection rates, and updated service provisions in relevant organisations. 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/publications](http://www.treoir.ie/publications).

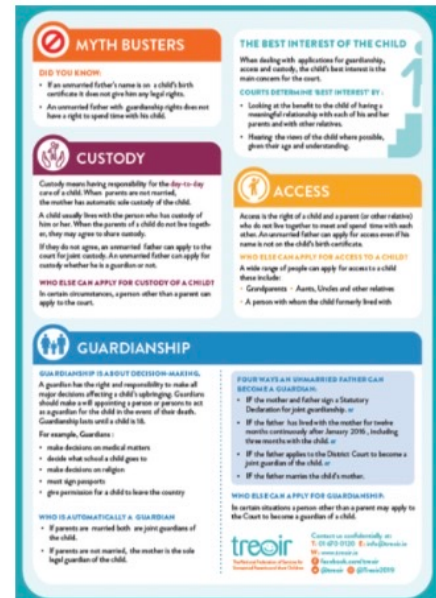
### 3. Infographics

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’ in 2019. Another infographic was developed from the same funding stream in 2020 which covers information on access to justice. Both infographics are available online at [www.treoir.ie/publications](http://www.treoir.ie/publications).

Pic. 1 Access to Justice



Pic. 2 General Infographic



### C. WEBSITE

Treoir's website is informative, factual and kept up to date with information for parents who are not married to each other, their children, and those working with them. Treoir maintains the website to ensure that it remains accessible and easy to navigate. The service is for all 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 or through our online order form now available through the website [www.treoir.ie/publications](http://www.treoir.ie/publications).

We have added a 'Call-back Request' option which is prominent on all relevant pages of the website. We have also improved our online publication ordering system where clients and professionals can order whatever they require directly through the website.

There were 91,379 visitors to the Treoir website in 2020, 83.3% of which were new visitors to [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie). This is an **increase of 7%** compared to the same period in 2019. Many visitors

are referred to Treoir's website through other sites, with The Citizens Information Board's website being the main source of referrals at 2,125 or 40.1% of all referrals. Most frequently visited pages of the website were:

- Homepage: 10%
- Fathers: 15%
- Maintenance: 15%
- Access & Custody: 12%
- Guardianship: 9%

## 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 nine workshops to groups in 2020. Five workshops took place before the country went into lockdown. These workshops were held in Dublin, Kerry and Kilkenny. Four workshops took place via Zoom. Participants at these workshops came from Cavan, Donegal, Laois, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo. A total of one hundred and fifty people attended the workshops.

**Pic 3. Outreach Delivered Via Zoom**





## Workshops for workers

Treoir hosted seven workshops to groups of workers who provide services to unmarried parents and their extended families. Workshops were attended by those working in statutory, voluntary, community and youth work sectors.

Workshops were also provided to MABS (Money Advice & Budgeting Service).

## Workshops for parents

Two workshops were provided for parents. A workshop was presented to parents in the Irish Prison Service and to a Young Mothers Network supported by the Dominican Justice Office, for parents living in Direct Provision Centres.

## Issues raised/identified in workshops

Participants at Zoom workshops were sent online copies of Treoir publications in advance of the workshops. They received the ***Information Pack for Unmarried Parents*** and leaflets in relation to ***Access/Custody, Guardianship, Passports, Birth Registration, Maintenance, Passports, Cohabiting Parents and Shared Parenting***.

There were many questions raised at the Zoom workshops regarding the operation of the family law courts during Covid-19. Due to the Coronavirus the Family Court Service has been severely restricted. Priority was given to applications for Protection, Safety and Barring Orders. Strict rules apply about making applications to the courts in relation to family law matters during Covid-19.

Participants were sent copies of the Treoir leaflets – ***ACCESS TO JUSTICE & COVID-19 - GOING TO COURT***. This leaflet gives information on the operation of the family law courts during Covid-19. It includes information on *Appointments and Court Dates in relation to applications for Access, Custody, Maintenance, and Guardianship*. The leaflet also includes updates on Legal Aid and One- Parent Family Payment.

Participants at the workshops were also sent copies of guidelines issued by the Family and Child Law Committee of the Law Society in relation to family law matters during Covid-19.

## Feedback from participants at Workshops

- *Just to say thanks again for the talk last night. I have received a great response from the volunteers who were all thrilled with the information you gave them – CEO Support Service for Parents.*
- *Firstly, thank you for facilitating the Treoir workshop today, as usual it was extremely informative and enlightening. I don't think there was one person in the room who left there today without reflecting on the whole area of custody, guardianship and access, and the implications for their own practice - TUSLA Senior Child and Family Network Coordinator*

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, Treoir's National Information Service, the Teen Parents Support Programme and Kinship care. Treoir's advocacy and policy work is informed by issues identified by participants at the workshops.

## E. SHARED PARENTING AND MEDIATION

Treoir's strategic plan includes the development of shared parenting and mediation to resolve difficulties between parents. Many clients contact Treoir when they are experiencing parenting issues. Through our experience in dealing with parenting related issues and hearing the lived experiences of parents who struggle to share parenting, even where parenting plans are in place, Treoir identified that parents needed further supports in helping them to move into a healthy shared parenting relationship.

### Let's Work it Out

Treoir has extensive experience in working with parents and listening to their stories about their various struggles in trying to parent together, particularly after the breakdown of a relationship. We have recognised, over time, that such parents may need additional resources to aid them in their shared parenting journeys, even where parenting plans are in place by agreement, through mediation, or by court order.

Family mediators have expertise in helping parents come to agreements around parenting and parenting plans. Parents who wish to share parenting recognise the benefits a healthy parenting relationship on their child. Mediators themselves have many of the skills parents may need to establish and maintain a positive shared parenting approach.

Dublin Community Mediation (DCM) and Treoir have teamed up to develop *'Let's Work it Out'* which is a nuanced approach to helping parents who wish to share parenting. This approach uses dispute/conflict resolution, problem-solving, communication skills and strategies, and parenting programmes to enhance shared parenting practices. We hope these proven methods will guide and assist parents who may be struggling to achieve a healthy shared parenting relationship with each other that places their child at the centre of their parenting.

### How can 'Let's Work it Out' help parents?

Where parents wish to enhance or improve their shared parenting, more often than not, growing communication skills can really help to improve the relationship. Let's Work it Out focuses on working with parents so that they can start to recognise areas they may need to improve when engaging with the other parent. This can involve thinking about a new approach to having difficult conversations, ways to avoid conflict, and or managing existing conflict, and recognising the other parents' concerns and points of view. These skills can lead to a much healthier form of shared parenting.

Treoir began to refer parents to the pilot programme in December 2020 and will continue to refer parents throughout 2021, with a view to supporting 50+ parents through the duration of the twelve-month period of the project.

Please use [this link](https://youtu.be/EWYQi1yoUJY) to view a short video which describes 'Let's Work it Out'.  
<https://youtu.be/EWYQi1yoUJY>



**Pic 4. Pilot Development Group Meeting**



### **Shared Parenting Webinar**

In October 2020, Treoir held its first online webinar. The webinar focused on shared parenting and the concept of parenting time. There were five speakers –

- Dr. William Fabricious – Parenting Time
- Helen Coughlan (Solicitor - Chairperson of the Law Society Family Law Committee) – Family Law - Shared Parenting and Access to Justice
- Anne O'Neill (solicitor) – Family Law
- Anne Staunton (CEO) – Rainbows Ireland – issues with guardianship
- Dave Saunders (CEO) – From Lads to Dads – parenting issues

The webinar was well attended by 79 guests and was well received. The concept of Parenting Time helps to understand the importance of sharing parenting and the emotional impact a healthy parental relationship can have on a child throughout childhood and into adolescence.

# 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 has enabled Treoir to reach a greater number of services in communities nationwide. Members showcase their own services, network with similar organisations, share good practices, identify key issues and contribute to policy development through Treoir. This work has continued throughout 2020. An example of where Treoir's model of engagement worked well could be seen in 2020 as members participated in our policy submissions, where they raised concerns from within their own work with families.

In 2020, Treoir was pleased to welcome the National Family Support Network and Ringsend and Irishtown Community Centre (RICC) as new members. We also welcomed Lorraine Barry of RICC as a new council member from RICC. Treoir's Membership Officer will continue to grow membership and provide opportunities for members to network and engage in Treoir's strategic priorities going forward, with planned membership forums throughout 2021.

# POLICY DEVELOPMENT / RESEARCH

**Treoir will advocate effectively on behalf of parents of children not married to each other to ensure the best outcomes for all.**

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## POLICY

During the past twelve months Treoir advocated for the rights of parents of children not married to each other. We did this in the very difficult environment of global pandemic by meeting with key government ministers and department heads with the aim of bringing about legislative change. This work was progressed by way of submissions to government and working groups, and to Oireachtas Committees. Treoir's advocacy and policy development work was informed by our membership organisations, from our outreach work, by working collaboratively with other groups, and from queries received by our National Specialist Information Service.

The past twelve months have been unprecedented in terms of the challenges of Covid19. The pandemic has affected parents and children, the operation of the family courts and put huge pressures on service provision. The onset and evolution of the pandemic brought about significant changes to peoples working lives. It increased dependence on the State and social welfare system. Overnight the nature of work changed with people working from home while others became unemployed or were temporarily furlonged and frontline workers were stretched to the limits. Government continued to function, but the capacity of the State's family justice system was significantly reduced with domestic abuse cases taking precedence.

A year on from the onset of the pandemic a number of key issues have come to the forefront particularly in relation to parents of children not married to each other. The impact on the family courts has been significant with long delays being experienced by people, particularly in the Dublin District Court, wanting to make applications to do with access, guardianship, custody and or maintenance. The administrative backlog which is characterised by striking regional variation can have a major impact on people's mental well-being while putting additional stress on parental relationships and parenting. The challenges for people to access the National Mediation Service in person, coupled with exceptionally long delays have exposed the serious fault lines which have existed for some time in the State family justice system.

There is little doubt that the pandemic created a lot of challenges for groups working with parents and children. This led to opportunities to work collaboratively with others and the emergence of a number of initiatives which remain in place. These include the setting up of a domestic violence working group with a range of civil society groups. A working group addressing lone parents' issues comprising representatives from St Vincent de Paul, Spark, One Family, Flac, Bernardos and Treoir was also setup. This coalition of groups have made representations to government on supports for women and children, parental leave, food poverty, social welfare, and policing. Working collaboratively with other groups has been very beneficial as information is shared and a better sense of the broader picture in terms of the multifaceted nature of need and the importance of cross departmental coordinated policy initiatives emerges.

Treoir has also been actively involved with the Community Platform and its working groups on childcare and pre-budget submissions. The Platform has identified childcare as a key issue and one which we intend to work on going forward. Every year the Community Platform submit a detailed pre-budget submission to government, this happened in 2020 and we have already begun preparatory work for our next submission. Treoir is also a member of the Children Rights Alliance

(CRA) and as part of our broader policy work, Treoir attended briefings from former Supreme Court judge Catherine McGuinness and the former Special Rapporteur on Child Protection Geoffrey Shannon on reform of the family law system and from the head of Tusla Brendan Gloster, and senior officials from the Departments of Children and Social Protection.

Treoir's internal policy subgroup held its first meeting in June 2020. Terms of reference were agreed, and the group met three times since its inaugural meeting. The work of the subgroup facilitated discussion of Treoir's guardianship document, and its submissions to the Oireachtas Justice Committee on the General Scheme of the Family Court Bill and to the Department of Social Protection working group on reform of the maintenance system, respectively. Treoir held a very successful lunchtime round table meeting to which all member organisations were invited in preparation of the submission to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection working group on reform of the child maintenance system. The event was very productive in terms of feedback from members working on the ground and also in terms of outreach.

### Meetings with Ministers

- In September 2020 Treoir CEO Damien Peelo, Dave Saunders (Council Member) and Mary Roche (Policy officer) met with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Roderick O'Gorman, TD. During the meeting we informed the Minister Treoir had made a number of submissions (2017 and September 2020) to his Department regarding the establishment of a Register of Guardians. We welcomed the announcement of the establishment of specialist family court and reiterated our call for Judges to be given comprehensive training in relation to child welfare and development and that the Child and Family Agency invest resources to train staff in the law surrounding State intervention in child welfare and protection.

We discussed the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015, Part 9 of which deals with Amendments to Civil Registration Act 2004.

During the pandemic childcare again came to the fore as a significant issue for lone parents and front-line workers. We told the Minister we welcomed the National Childcare Scheme but that we believed childcare should be publicly funded and universally available to all children irrespective of the employment or socio-economic status of their parents. Other issues raised included support for kinship carers, poverty in female headed lone parent households, income security for lone parents who are unable to return to work due to lack of childcare and the importance of the school meals programme and additional after schools supports and activities for children in disadvantaged households. We discussed access to justice for lone parents in relation to the civil legal aid budget and income thresholds.

- In November 2020 Treoir Chairperson Dr Ruth Barrington, its CEO Damien Peelo and Mary Roche met with the Minister for Justice and Equality Helen McEntee TD. The Minister was accompanied by two senior civil servants, Tracey O'Keeffe Principal and Mary O'Callaghan, Assistant Principal. The issues discussed included the mission of Treoir, the challenges the pandemic posed for s parents who had custody and care of children, the delays in the family courts arising from Covid 19 restrictions, the need to raise the threshold for legal aid for family law cases, the important role that properly mediation services could play in resolving conflict between parents and in promoting shared parenting, the need for a national register of guardians, the commencement of the provisions of the Civil Registration Act 2014 requiring the name of fathers be recorded on birth certificates, and the linking of guardianship of unmarried fathers to birth registration. The Minister extended an invitation to Treoir to join the Family Justice Advisory Committee which the Department of Justice was establishing.

- Throughout 2020 we attended regular briefing with the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and the Department of Education.

### **The Citizens Assembly**

The recent hearings by the Citizens Assembly on gender equality and reform of the constitution are also part of a broader debate around the law and the changing nature of identity, gender roles, parenting, and family structure in contemporary Irish society. Treoir's submission to the Assembly in 2020 called for equality of treatment for unmarried fathers, and for them to be afforded the same rights as married couples and unmarried mothers, when it comes to automatic guardianship of their children. Our submission emphasised how Ireland is out of step with other EU jurisdictions, and the north of Ireland and the UK where unmarried fathers acquire automatic guardianship if their name is on the child's birth certificate. We also called for equality of treatment for all families, irrespective of marital status.

We noted that Article 41.1. confers rights on the family unit as distinct from the rights of individual members of the family and are therefore distinct from personal rights protected by the Constitution. Treoir recommends that parental rights, if enumerated in the Irish constitution, apply equally to all parents, mothers, fathers, married or unmarried and be subject to the principle that children's rights are paramount.

The recommendations from the Assembly regarding the position of the family in the constitution whereby Article 41 should be amended so that it would protect private and family life, with the protection afforded to the family not limited to the marital family, is very welcome and in keeping with Treoir's call for equality of treatment for parents of children not married to each other. We also welcome the recommendation that in terms of childcare, Ireland should move to a "publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of childcare" over the next decade.

### **Treoir made the following submissions:**

- Submission on the Review of the Childcare Act 1991 to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs – July 2020. [Submission on the Review of the Childcare Act 1991 to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs – July 2020.](#)
- Pre-Budget submission to the Department of Social Protection – July 2020. [Pre-Budget submission to the Department of Social Protection – July 2020.](#)
- Submission to the Citizens Assembly Public Consultation on Gender Equality - 2020.
- Election Manifesto <https://www.treoir.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Treoir-Election-Manifesto-2020-Final-V.2.pdf>
- Joint NGO Submission to Committee on Covid [https://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/Final\\_Joint\\_NGO\\_Submission\\_COVID-19\\_One\\_Parent\\_Families.pdf](https://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/Final_Joint_NGO_Submission_COVID-19_One_Parent_Families.pdf)

### **Treoir participated in the following working groups:**

- The Department of Children Early Learning and Care Stakeholder Forum.
- The Legal Aid Board Consultative Panel

### **Funding applications**

- In July 2020, our funding application to the Department of Justice & Equality for the Promotion of LGBTI Visibility and Inclusion was successful. The funding will be used to produce up to date information relevant to the needs of this particular group.
- In June 2020, our application to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for funding under the UN Eradication of Poverty Day was successful. The award was used to produce our one-page Access to Justice leaflet which was distributed to maternity hospitals and family centres across the country.

# TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

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

During 2020 Treoir achieved this Strategic Priority 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 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 2020, the National Coordinator continued to support the 11 TPSP projects as well as other professionals working with young parents.

**Table 1. List of TPSP project locations**

Where to find a TPSP	
<b>Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary</b>	<b>Dublin 3, 13, 17, and part of 3 and 9</b>
<b>Cork City or County</b>	<b>Galway City or County</b>
<b>Donegal – Letterkenny, Finn Valley and Irishwomen</b>	<b>Limerick City or County</b>
<b>Ballyfermot, Bluebell and Inchicore</b>	<b>Louth</b>
<b>Dublin 6, 12 and 24</b>	<b>North Wexford and Enniscorthy</b>
<b>Contact information for local TPSPs – <a href="https://www.tpsp.ie/where_to_find_a_tpsp.PAGE5.html">https://www.tpsp.ie/where_to_find_a_tpsp.PAGE5.html</a></b>	

### This was achieved mainly through:

- maintaining regular contact with TPSP projects and holding 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 and social welfare
- maintaining contact with key staff in relevant government departments and state agencies and advocating on behalf of the TPSP and young parents nationally
- collaborating with other agencies and initiatives that have interests in common with young parents in areas such as housing, childcare and parenting supports
- providing training to TPSP staff and other professionals working with young parents
- 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

- supporting TPSP projects with the induction of new staff
- administering of Tusla's School Completion Programme (SCP)
- responding to emerging issues such as referral criteria to the TPSP
- 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, in 2020 the National Coordinator organised separate meeting 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 the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), the SUSI grant, the SCP, and aspects of the Supplementary Welfare System.

In line with the Youth Participation Strategy, in 2020 a young mother attended meetings of the TPSP National Advisory Committee in 2020. This young parent is a current service user of the TPSP who has recently progressed from Secondary School to Further Education. Due to the restrictions imposed by Covid 19 these meetings were held remotely.

### **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 2020, the National Coordinator made a Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP) and a submission to the Statement of Strategy 2021- 2023 of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

During 2020 the National Coordinator represented the needs of young parents on:

- The Irish Coalition to end Youth Homelessness and
- The Parenting Network.

In 2020 most face-to-face meetings were suspended due to Covid 19. However, the National Coordinator represented young parents at online events organised by:

- The Children's Rights Alliance
- Tusla
- Focus Ireland
- The Irish Coalition to end Youth Homelessness (ICEYH)
- The Parenting Network and
- The Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN).

### **Training for TPSP staff**

In 2020, all staff received training from Pobal in relation to the Sponsored Components of the National Childcare Scheme. This Scheme commenced fully in November 2019 including the Sponsored Component which gives free childcare to mothers in second level education. Supporting young mothers to access this free childcare has proved very frustrating and time consuming for both TPSP staff and the National Coordinator. However, through contacts made with staff in DCYA and Pobal and the training delivered by Pobal this situation should improve.

## Training for professionals working with young parents

During 2020, the TPSP organized a *Focus on Fathers* workshops targeting professionals working with young parents nationally. This Workshop builds on materials developed originally by the Louth TPSP and funded at that time by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. It 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 85 non-TPSP professionals working with young fathers. These include youth workers, social workers, family support workers, aftercare workers, staff in family resource centres, staff in housing agencies and those working in drug addiction services.

This Workshops has 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. It is also a way in which young parents living in these areas can benefit to some extent from the resources and expertise of the TPSP.

*The TPSP Toolkit* Workshop did not take place in 2020 due to Covid 19 restrictions.

## Young Parents and Housing

The current ongoing housing crisis continues to have a serious effect on the young parents and children supported by the TPSP. In 2020 this was exacerbated by Covid 19 as, for part of 2020, children living in homelessness were confined to cramped accommodation and unable to access parks and other open spaces. TPSP staff are reported that they are seeing developmental delays in children living in substandard or homeless accommodation.

In June 2020, the TPSP conducted a Census which captured all its service users with a serious housing need. The Census used the ETHOS<sup>[1]</sup> typology used by FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. This typology divides those with a housing need into Roofless, Houseless, Insecure, and Inadequate.

The Census found that 20% of young parents supported in 2020 had a housing need i.e., 128 young parents consisting of 122 mothers and 6 fathers. In June 2020, no young parents supported by the TPSP were sleeping rough, compared to 2 young parents living rough in June 2019. However, 23 young parents were in homeless accommodation, 63 were in insecure accommodation and a further 42 were in accommodation that was considered inadequate either because it was substandard and/or seriously overcrowded. This data is used to inform discussions on Youth Homelessness particularly in relation to the additional supports needed by TPSP service users by virtue of their being both young and parents.

## School Completion Programme (SCP)

The SCP is funded through Tusla's Education Support Services (TESS). The aim of the SCP is to increase the number of young people staying in school and in doing so increase the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle or the equivalent. In 2020, the National Coordinator took over the distribution and administration of Tusla's SCP allocation to the TPSP. In May 2020, for the first time, the 2020/21 SCP Retention Plan and Budget Application was presented to Tusla as one unified Plan. This process went well with support from Sharon Kavanagh, Treoir's Administrative and Finance Officer and Tusla rated the Plan as 'Very Strong'. One benefit of this new arrangement is that the SCP fund is now divided among all 11 TPSPs whereas previously 3 of the projects did not have access to this funding.



## **Review of referral criteria to the TPSP**

In 2020, the TPSP conducted a review of its referral criteria considering factors such as the reduction in teen births, the fact that projects are sometimes asked by Tusla and others to work with young parents outside current referral criteria and the fact that TESS SCP allows the TPSP to support young parents up to 25 years of age when they are in education or training. The review took the form of two separate meetings with an external facilitator. Issues such as resources, maintaining the quality of the service and fidelity to the founding vision of the TPSP were considered. A decision was made to retain the TPSP's current referral criteria while allowing for flexibility regarding slightly older parents or parents outside the TPSP's immediate catchment areas who have high levels of need. This decision considers variations among TPSP projects such as their resources to respond to local emerging needs, the availability of the other family support services within their organisations and the demands of their funder locally.

## **Reporting to Tusla**

In 2020 the National Coordinator continued to provide the Corporate Planning and Corporate Performance Section (CPCP) of Tusla with quarterly updates on the numbers of young parents supported by the TPSP projects.

## **Responding to queries**

The TPSP National Coordinator acts as a source of information, advice, guidance and referral to other support for pregnant and parenting teens, their families and professionals in areas where there is not a TPSP. During 2020 she also delivered an Information Session on teen pregnancy to Leaving Certificate Applied classes in South Dublin and Kildare.

## **TPSP Website**

During 2020, 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 2020, the website had 7,852 page views. It had 2,699 visitors of who 350 were return visitors.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>

(accessed 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021)

# KINSHIP CARE IRELAND

## Treoir will co-ordinate the Kinship Care Ireland Coordinator

### Kinship Care Ireland

Kinship care is the full-time parenting of children and young people, by grandparents, older siblings, aunts and uncles, other relatives, or close friends of the family, in circumstances such as the death of a parent, parental substance misuse, abandonment, illness, or imprisonment. Kinship families tend to occupy an *informal grey space*,<sup>1</sup> where their rights, entitlements and support needs may not be sufficiently recognised, or addressed. Following meetings with the founder of Kinship Care Ireland (KCI), Treoir offered to provide a governance structure, which would enable a dedicated project to be set up, to work with and for kinship families.

2020 began with a positive and productive meeting, with Bernard Gloster, CEO of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, followed by a successful funding application, which received support from key people within the Child and Family Agency. Treoir now directly employs the Coordinator of Kinship Care Ireland and is represented on the KCI steering group.

**Pic 5. Meeting Bernard Gloster**

Pictured: Bernard Gloster, CEO of Tusla, Róisín Farragher, Kinship Care steering Group member, Caitríona nic Mhuiris, Kinship Care Founder and Robbie Gilligan, Professor of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin - January 2020



More success came later in the year, with the awarding of €3,000 from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, and an invitation to KCI founder, Caitríona nic Mhuiris, to participate in several useful initiatives, including the SEI showcase, with 600 people in attendance, where the new website for KCI, went 'live'.

A range of meetings took place in 2020, with key stakeholders, to promote the rights and recognition of kinship families and a formal policy submission was made from KCI, to the Review of the Childcare Act (1991), in September 2020. Raising awareness of kinship families remained a focal point throughout 2020, through active social media and online engagement, as well as interviews in the print and broadcast media. A detailed article was published in the Irish Times in December 2020, marking the progress of Kinship Care Ireland, since Caitríona's first interview with the same journalist (Sheila Wayman) five years earlier.

<sup>1</sup> Burns K., O'Mahony C. & Brennan, R., (2021) 'Private Family Arrangements' for Children in Ireland: The Informal Grey Space In-Between State Care and the Family Home. British Journal of Social Work, (2021) 00, 1–18 doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcab032



The KCI Steering Group, now comprises representatives from fostering and family support organisations, as well as those with lived experience of kinship carers. They met on 10 occasions throughout the year, with online meetings only, from March 2020.

During the final quarter of the year, the Steering Group worked with a consultant, to develop a strategic plan for Kinship Care Ireland, based on feedback from an external audience, and input from within Treoir. The *Strategic Plan* will guide the vision, activities, and outputs of KCI, from 2021-2026, underpinning the work-plan of new Coordinator, Emma Byrne-MacNamee, who commenced in her role on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

# 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 2020 Treoir has increased its audience through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which has significantly increased our reach.

Our membership officer also attends various external events with other organisations in order to link in with their work and promote Treoir as a service.

**Pic 6. Attendance at NWCI 'Celebrate the Change Makers' Event.**



## Communications Strategy

Treoir engaged with a communications specialist in 2020 to develop a communications strategy to enable the development of communications of our services, policy work, and project work through campaigns and promotions. Part of this work included a review of Treoir's 'overall messaging', 'social media activity', 'press releases', 'audiences', and branding. We have created a communications calendar which is used as a template for communications activity which is in line with regular queries to Treoir's specialist information service during each months of the year.

### *New Key Messages:*

1. Treoir helps parents who are not married to each other better understand complex family law issues, specifically access and custody, maintenance and guardianship. We also promote shared parenting and provide parenting tips to help parents develop good parenting relationships.

2. Treoir believes children born to unmarried parents should have the same rights as those born to married parents.
3. Treoir believes that children deserve to be loved and cared for by both parents, where possible.
4. Treoir advocates for changes to the Constitution to ensure that all parents have the same rights regardless of their marital status or gender.
5. Treoir develops policies to influence and advance the reform of the Family Law system.
6. Treoir advocates for systematic review of how public services and social welfare is delivered to reflect the changing family structures of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## COVID19 Response

In response to issues affecting parents during COVID19 health guidance and travel restrictions, and remote working guidance, Treoir began working remotely in March 2020. The Information Service received an increased number of support requests pertaining to issues parents were experiencing due to travel restrictions and social distancing guidelines. In response, Treoir created a dedicated information page on its website which listed various categories of COVID19 information regarding:

- About this page
- Social Protection Information
- Family Law During Covid19
- Domestic Violence Services
- Shared Parenting, Access and Custody
- Birth Registrations
- Supports for parents
- Housing Information

The page has been kept up-to-date with any relevant information affecting parents and children.

## Media

### Press Releases

During 2020, Treoir made several press statements to highlight issues parents raised during COVID19 travel restrictions and social distancing measures. The following print and broadcast media covered the issues:

- COVID19 Travel Restrictions and the impact on Access and Custody / Shared Parenting –
  - Irish Times
  - Waterford WLRFM
  - Limerick Today
  - Kildare KLRFM
  - Morning Ireland
- Shared Parenting at Christmas
  - Waterford FM
  - Limerick Live
  - Kerry Radio

## Direct contact by Journalists

Treoir has developed good working relationships with media representatives who contact Treoir for comments relating to issues affecting parents using Treoir's service. The following articles were printed which relate to shared parenting during COVID19 restrictions:

- Shared Parenting contribution
  - Irish Times - Sheila Wayman

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/parenting/tips-on-how-to-make-those-blended-families-work-1.4338539>

- Irish Times – Sheila Wayman – Fathers and Shared Parenting

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/parenting/shared-parenting-fathers-being-forced-to-go-down-adversarial-route-1.4285479> July

- Irish Times – Second lockdown and impact on lone parents

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/parenting/i-can-t-live-with-the-thought-of-being-locked-down-with-him-1.4410819>

## Bloggers

- How to Fall Apart – impact of COVID19 on parenting arrangements

<https://linktr.ee/howtofallapart>

## 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 2020. 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 2020.

# 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 its 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 2020 the Council continued to oversee the implementation of the 5-year Strategic Plan and worked to ensure the organisation is fully compliant with all legislation and the Charities Code.

The Council of Treoir has three sub-committees to carry out important functions on its behalf: the **Finance and Audit Committee**, **HR Committee** and **Policy Committee**.

### Finance and Audit Committee:

This committee met twice during 2020. This Committee's work included:

- Reviewing the budget for 2020 and the management accounts
- Reviewing statutory accounts
- Ensuring Treoir is compliant with the financial provisions of Charities Governance Code
- Reviewing, updating and developing policies and procedures including Treoir's reserve policy
- Meeting with external auditor in connection with the audit
- Carrying out risk assessment, such as for Treoir administering the funding for School completion funding on behalf of Tusla
- Examining the budgetary implications to make the office compliant with return-to-work protocols to manage Covid-19

The members of this committee are Marian Barnard (Chair), Liam Kirwan and Ruth Barrington. The CEO and Administration Officer support the Committee.

### HR Committee

This Committee met twice during 2020. The work of the Committee included:

- Implementing Treoir's remuneration policy
- Updating key policies and procedures including working from home policy and return to work policy post covid-19 restrictions
- Compliance with the Governance Code as it relates to staffing policies.

Members of this Committee are Liam Kirwan, Patricia O'Donovan and Marian Bernard. The CEO supports the Committee.

### Policy Committee

The Policy Committee had its first meeting in 2020 and met twice during the year. The Committee worked on Treoir's Guardianship policy document that seeks to improve the situation of unmarried fathers guardianship rights. The Committee recommended a strategy to the Council that would seek to:

- provide more information about Guardianship
- advocate for a National Register of Guardians
- pursue research with other organisations examining how other countries respond to guardianship for unmarried fathers

Members of the Committee are Louise Bayliss (chair), Rosemary Grant, Robin Hanan, Adele O'Connor. The Policy Officer supports the Committee.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2020

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Company Registration No. 82321 (Republic of Ireland)

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 2020

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

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

		<b>Restricted Funds 2020 €</b>	<b>Unrestricted Funds 2020 €</b>	<b>Total 2020 €</b>	<b>Total 2019 €</b>
	<b>Notes</b>				
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
Other Income	<b>3</b>	10,000	12,008	22,008	41,188
Charitable activities	<b>3</b>	731,905	-	731,905	445,452
<b>Total incoming resources</b>		741,905	12,008	753,913	486,640
<b>Resources expended</b>					
Charitable activities	<b>4</b>	(654,332)	(11,159)	(665,491)	(442,876)
<b>Total resources expended</b>		(654,332)	(11,159)	(665,491)	(442,876)
<b>Net surplus for the financial year</b>	<b>5</b>	87,573	849	88,422	43,764

The income and expenditure account has been prepared on the basis that all operations are continuing operations.

As presented to the AGM on 25<sup>th</sup> May

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

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

**AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	Notes	2020 €	€	2019 €	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Intangible assets	8		9,732		2,047
Tangible assets	9		12,265		16,535
			<u>21,997</u>		<u>18,582</u>
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	11	14,586		12,402	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>253,897</u>		<u>158,395</u>	
		268,483		170,797	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	12	<u>(80,289)</u>		<u>(67,610)</u>	
<b>Net current assets</b>			<u>188,194</u>		<u>103,187</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			<u>210,191</u>		<u>121,769</u>
<b>Reserves</b>					
Restricted funds	15	125,643		38,070	
Unrestricted funds	15	<u>84,548</u>		<u>83,699</u>	
<b>Members' funds</b>		<u>210,191</u>		<u>121,769</u>	

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**

.....  
Marian Barnard  
**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 2020**

	2020	2019
	€	€
<b>Income</b>		
HSE Dublin CH09	225,725	225,723
Tusla	18,274	22,184
HSE Crisis Pregnancy Prog	148,000	148,000
Membership fees	1,300	1,300
Citizens Information Board	34,400	34,400
Lottery Funding	-	8,000
Rental Income	8,375	8,486
Other Income	203	9,672
POBAL	65,506	15,145
Kinship Care	10,000	11,000
DEASP	2,130	2,730
Tusla - Tess	240,000	-
	<u>753,913</u>	<u>486,640</u>
<b>Administrative expenses</b>	<u>(665,491)</u>	<u>(442,876)</u>
<b>Operating surplus</b>	<u><u>88,422</u></u>	<u><u>43,764</u></u>

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

## SCHEDULE OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	2020	2019
	€	€
<b>Administrative expenses</b>		
Wages and salaries	300,503	282,885
Social security costs	21,396	26,022
Staff training / Human Resources	3,463	4,578
Staff pension costs defined contribution	7,201	3,400
Rent	33,404	33,124
Cleaning	1,972	3,083
Power, light and heat	3,499	3,346
Computer running costs	5,222	7,868
Animation costs	-	9,074
Repairs and maintenance	707	3,457
Insurance	1,593	1,460
Supplies	1,874	5,064
Membership	3,010	1,999
Newspapers	668	559
Publishing	6,826	14,155
Travelling expenses	1,037	3,267
Conferences / meetings	6,070	4,948
Legal and professional fees	12,180	11,708
Accountancy	-	1,538
Audit fees	3,383	3,125
Bank charges	215	206
Printing and stationery	1,400	5,479
Advertising / Marketing	48	534
Telecommunications	4,519	3,599
Administration expenses	695	906
School completion expenses	233,947	-
Amortisation	2,316	1,478
Depreciation	8,343	6,014
	<u>665,491</u>	<u>442,876</u>

## 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.

To thank the staff of various government departments who have kindly given their time to Treoir either through making presentations or discussing policy issues.



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**Facebook.com/treoir**

**@treoir**

**@Treoir2019**



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