



The National Federation of Services for
Unmarried Parents and their Children

Annual Report 2016

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ABOUT TREOIR

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

Treoir is the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children. In 1976 various agencies working with unmarried parents formed a federation to channel efforts and improve the quality of the services provided to unmarried parents and their children. Members include self-help organisations, adoption societies, maternity hospitals, childcare organisations, HSE and accommodation services. In 1995 the Federation was renamed Treoir, which is the Irish word for direction or guidance.

Treoir:

- Operates a free, confidential National Specialist Information and Referral Service on all aspects of unmarried parenthood, providing clear and up-to-date information free of charge to parents who are not married to each other and to those involved with them. These include:
 - unmarried expectant parents
 - unmarried parents living apart
 - unmarried parents cohabiting
 - teen parents
 - opposite and same sex parents
 - grandparents and other relatives
 - those working with unmarried parents and their families
- manages the national co-ordination of the Teen Parents Support Programme
- advocates on behalf of unmarried parents and their children.

COUNCIL

Executive Committee

Dr Ruth Barrington, Chair

Christina Hughes, Carr's Child and Family Services, Treasurer

Siobhan Roddy, Doras Buí, Secretary, resigned 28 September 2016

(Ashling Dowling Deignan Secretary, from 28 September 2016

Thomas Quigley, Bessborough Care Centre

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Breda Collins, Limerick Social Services Council
Aisling Dowling-Deignan, Regional Adoption Service Tusla
Louise Graham, Cura
Marian Barnard, Anew
Ciara McKenna, National Maternity Hospital
Deirdre Pemberton, Here-2-Help
June Tinsley, Barnardos

TREOIR MEMBERS

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

HONORARY MEMBERS

Gemma Rowley Honorary Life Member

STAFF

Greg Straton, Chief Executive Officer
Margaret Morris, National Co-ordinator, TPSP
Brenda Forde, Senior Information Officer/ Publications Manager
Veronica Black, Information Officer / Training Officer
Beatrice Cronin, Marketing Manager / Information Officer
Bella Maher, Office Manager, resigned May 29th 2016
Joanne Hickey, Office Assistant
Helen Bowe, Administrator – appointed November 22nd 2016
Clare White, Information Officer – appointed December 12th 2016

MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON



In 2016, Treoir celebrated its fortieth anniversary as an organisation dedicated to improving the lives of unmarried parents and their children. To mark the 40th anniversary of Treoir and to record for posterity the achievements of the organisation, the Council decided that the story of Treoir should be told. On 7th December 2016, at an event to mark the fortieth anniversary, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, the Government's Rapporteur on Children, launched the history of Treoir – Towards Equality for Unmarried Parents and their Children - A history of the first 40 years of Treoir The Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and Their Children.

Treoir was founded in 1976 by a group of social workers, academics and other concerned professionals working with unmarried mothers in the 1960s, arising out of their concern at the dearth of services and stigma pervasive at the time. From the beginning, Treoir built a broad, inclusive membership which was non-denominational and nationwide. This inclusive membership is key to the longevity of the organisation, a value that we take pride in to this day. Treoir's mission, then and today, was and is to provide clear and accurate information to unmarried parents and those involved with them. This has been achieved through the National Specialist Information Service, workshops and publications notably the Information Pack for Unmarried Parents, which is available on our website, www.treoir.ie.

Treoir would like to thank all associated with the production of the history of the first forty years of Treoir, in particular Dr Patricia Kennedy of UCD for her painstaking work in researching Treoir's documentation over the years and the other authors – Gemma Rowley, Margaret Dromey and Margaret Doherty - who contributed their personal experience of the problems Treoir faced and its many achievements. A copy of Towards Equality for Unmarried Parents and Their Children is available on our website at www.treoir.ie

The extent, range and complexity of the services that Treoir provides, as well as our role in advocating for unmarried parents, children and families suggests that the initial intent that drove the establishment of the organisation and its support by our members over forty years is still important and relevant. As indicated in 'Towards Equality for Unmarried Parents and Their Children':

“Unmarried families and unmarried fathers in particular still face discrimination in our laws and procedures. Commitments to children which this country entered into when it ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have yet to be honoured.”

In 2016 Treoir welcomed the enactment of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. The Act provides that unmarried fathers will for the first time in Ireland become automatic guardians of their children but only when they have lived with the mother of the child for a period of a year, three months of which must be following the birth of the child. While the Act represents an advance, the basing of guardianship rights of unmarried fathers on cohabitation with the mother, denies significant numbers of children the right to have two guardians and excludes many fathers from the lives of their children.

Treoir was particularly disappointed that the provision enabling unmarried couples to become joint guardians of their children by agreement at the point of birth registration was not commenced at the same time. Treoir repeats its call to the Minister for Social Protection to make every effort to resolve the issues in the Civil Registration Office that are delaying the commencement of this provision which would give effect to the right of every child to know the names of his or her parents.

Change at Treoir

The year 2016 was one of great change for Treoir. In April, we said farewell to our esteemed Chief Executive of many years, Margaret Dromey, who retired from Treoir and the organisation began a new chapter in its development. In May 2016, we welcomed Greg Straton as our Chief Executive. Greg brought fresh thinking to the challenge of disseminating high quality information in the age of social media and to the development of a new strategy for Treoir. It was with regret that the Council accepted Greg's resignation early in 2017 to take up a position in the public service. The Council wishes Greg every success in his future career.

During the year, Bella Maher, a long serving staff member, left Treoir. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge her commitment and contribution to the work of Treoir over many years. The Council was pleased to welcome two new staff members during the year, Clare White and Helen Bowe. The Council would also like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all staff during a challenging year of transition and change. Despite many challenges, the staff of Treoir continued to deliver high quality information, targeted services and policy advocacy on behalf of unmarried parents and their children, as demonstrated by the detail of this report.

Support for Treoir

The Council is very grateful to our funders for their continued support in 2016 for the work of Treoir. The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme of the Health Service Executive, Citizens Information Board and Tusla funded our range of activities to support and advocate for unmarried families and their children.

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

I would like to express my personal thanks to the members of the Council, and in particular to the members of the Executive Committee, for their engagement and commitment to the mission and values of Treoir.

NATIONAL SPECIALIST INFORMATION SERVICE

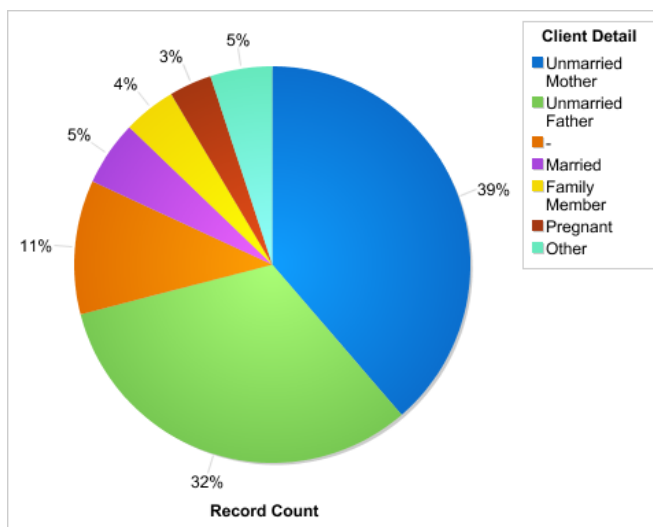
Treoir will maintain and develop the National Specialist Information Service for unmarried parents of the same or opposite sex, expectant parents, parents living together or apart, their extended families and those working with them.

A. CALLS TO THE NATIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE

Treoir National Specialist Information Service dealt with approximately 7,250 queries in 2016 logged against 3,860 Support Calls. This is because callers often have more than one query by type: legal, social welfare and/or shared parenting.

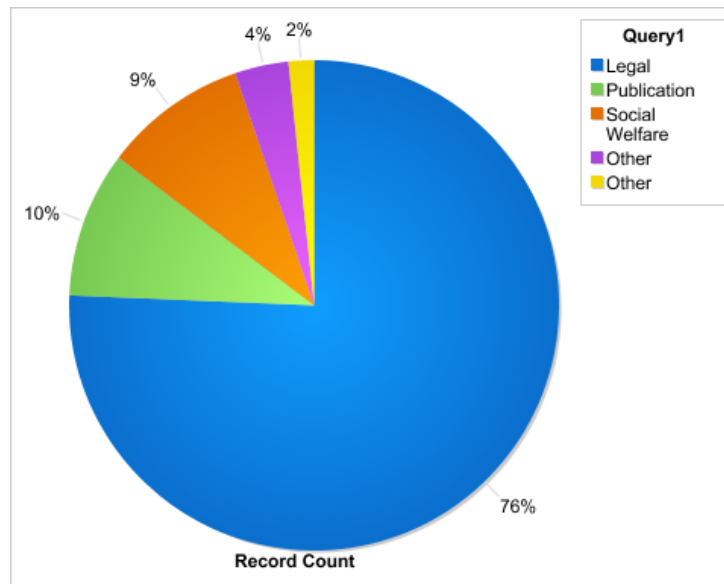
1. Contact Type

The majority of calls received in 2016 were from the category 'unmarried mothers' i.e. 39% amounting to 1,669 individual calls. This includes repeat callers. This is followed closely by the category 'unmarried fathers' i.e. 32% amounting to 1,246 individual calls, including repeat callers. Calls from Family Members are reported at 4% which amounts to 166 calls. The remaining calls were made up of professionals, expectant parents and other data base categories.



2. Type of Queries

The majority of queries dealt with in 2016 were categorized as **Legal (76%)**, **Publications (10%)**, **Social Welfare (9%)** and **Other (4%)**.

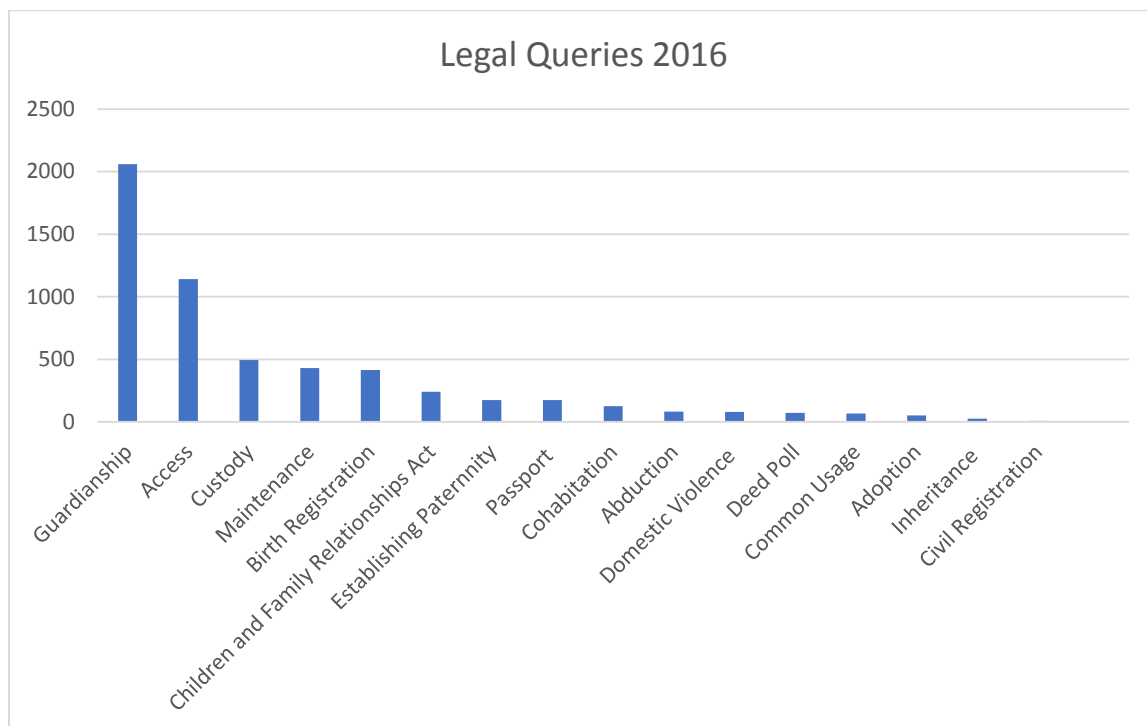


2.1 Legal Queries

Please note the breakdown percentages and figures below relate to a sample of the data available – namely the first 3 legal queries listed for Support Calls made in 2016. Some Support Calls may have as many as 7 associated queries.

Out of a sample of 5,637 legal queries the most frequent issues dealt with were related to **Guardianship 36%** (2,060 queries) and **Access 20.2%** (1,142 queries), followed by **Custody 8.7%** (493 queries), **Maintenance 7.6%** (429 queries) and **Birth Registration 7.3%** (415 queries).

A smaller number of queries were associated with **The Children and Family Relationships Act 4.2%** (240 queries) **Establishing Paternity 3.1%** (175 queries), **Passport 3%** (173 queries) **Cohabitation 2.2%** (126 queries), **Domestic Violence 1.4%** (80 queries) **Abduction 1.4%** (81 queries), **Deed Poll 1.2%** (73 queries) **Common Usage 1.2%** (67 queries) **Adoption 0.9%** (51 queries) **Inheritance 0.4%** (925 queries) and **Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 0.1%** (7 queries) issues.

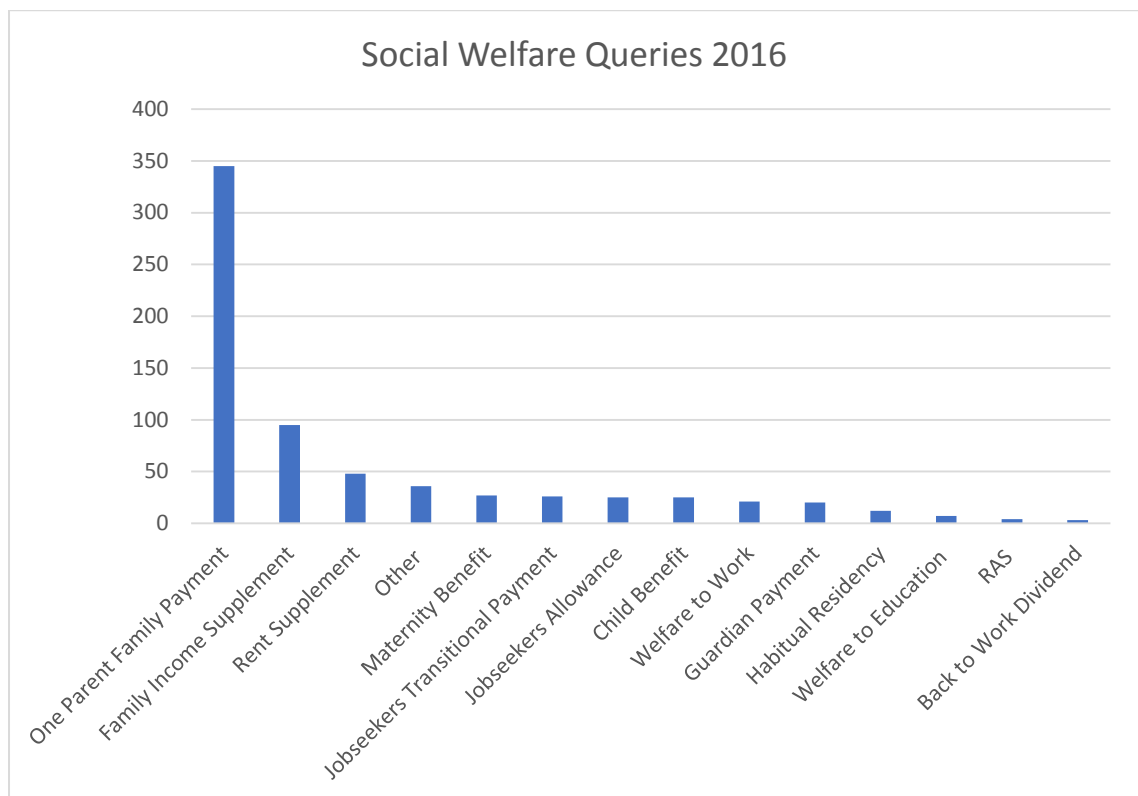


There are now three different means under Irish law by which an unmarried father can acquire Guardianship of his child which may explain why it features as the most frequent query. Qualitative feedback from the Information Service suggests callers are not always aware of the specific rights and duties related to Guardianship and how it differs from Custody.

2.2. Social Welfare Queries

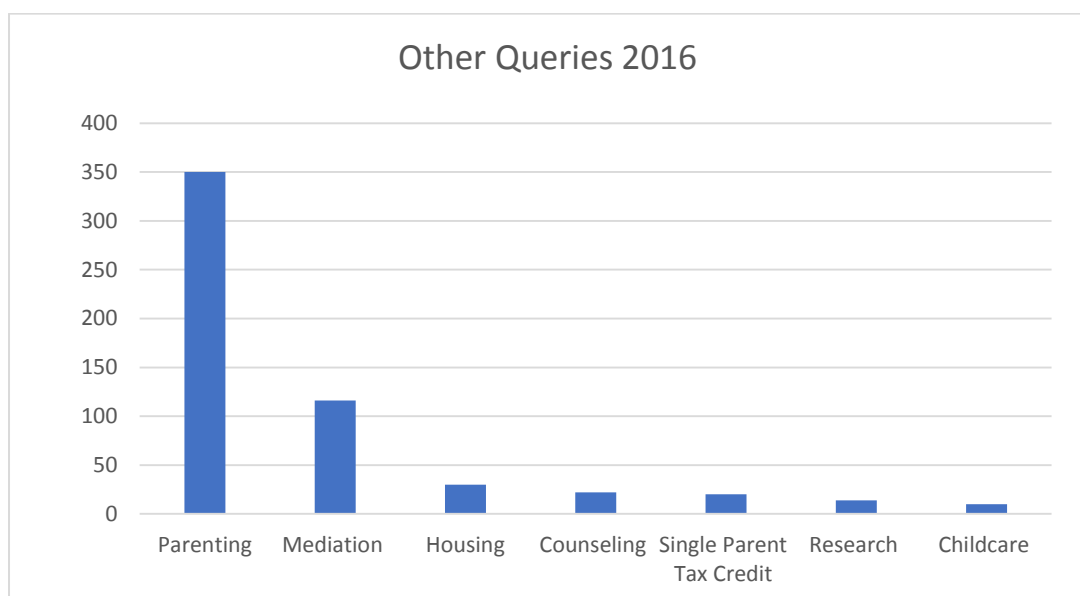
Please note the breakdown percentages and figures below relate to a sample of the data available – namely the first 3 Social Welfare queries listed for Support Calls made in 2016. Some Support Calls may have as many as 7 associated queries.

Out of a sample of 694 Social Welfare queries the main queries dealt with by the Treoir Specialist Information Service in 2016 were related to the **One Parent Family Payment 49.7%** (345 queries), **Family Income Supplement 13.6%** (95 queries) and **Rent Supplement 7%** (48 queries)



2.3. Other Queries

Parenting is the most frequently reported issue after Legal and Social Welfare queries and requests for Treoir publications. Out of a sample of 562 queries 62% of queries were related to **Parenting**. This was followed by **Mediation** which accounted for 20% of the queries.



Method of contact

83% of contact (3,223 calls) is handled by Treoir's LoCall Phone Information Service. 12% of contact handled by email (482 email queries). The remaining 4% of contact is made up of people who physically called into Treoir's office and Social Media requests for contact.

Case Studies

The following cases illustrate the complex nature of the queries dealt with by Treoir's National Specialist Information Service. The concrete examples demonstrate complexity of queries and the interaction between the queries raised. In addition, the case studies illustrate the skills and knowledge required to provide key relevant information and to deal with personal and sensitive circumstances.

CASE STUDY NO. 1

Children and Family Relationships Act 2015

STATEMENT OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILD – COURT FORM No. 58.49

J an unmarried father dropped in to Treoir. Earlier that day he had called in to the Family Law Court to make an application for access to his child. He was not given a court date for his application for access. He was given the form No. 58.49- Statement of Arrangements for Child. The court informed him that the form would have to be completed by him and the mother of the child and returned to the court before a court would issue a date for hearing his appeal. J was very confused by the questions and the new procedures.

The Information Officer informed him that under new legislation commenced on the 18th January 2016, anybody who makes an application to court for guardianship, access and custody of a child must complete and sign the Statement of Arrangements for Child document. The Information Officer and J went through the questions one by one to clarify what was required. She explained that he had to complete Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the form and then sign it at the end of Part 3.

Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the form contain 27 questions regarding factual information concerning the child and the applicant's proposed arrangements for the child.

When the father completes and signs the form he must keep a copy for himself and send a copy to the mother of his child who completes and signs the form and returns a copy of it to the father or the father's solicitor while keeping a copy for her own use.

The father (the applicant) must bring to the court a copy of the Statement of Arrangements as completed by him and the mother of the child.

J was concerned that the mother would not fill out the form. What would happen if she refused to complete and return the form? How could he show the court that he had sent the form to the mother? Would the case be heard? The Information Officer informed him that once he had completed his section of the form, he could bring a copy of it to the court clerk. The case could still go ahead in the court if the mother refused to cooperate and sign the form.

The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 has radically changed family law. Certain provisions of the Act were commenced on the 18th January 2016.

*Under the Act, in any application concerning the guardianship, access and custody of a child, the applicant must complete and annex to the notice of application a **Statement of Arrangements for Child** in the Form No. 58.49 concerning each child to whom the application relates, including both factual information concerning the child and the applicant's proposals in relation to the child. The applicant must complete Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the form and then sign it at the end of Part 3. The respondent then completes Part 4 or 5 where appropriate and returns it to the applicant or the applicant's solicitor. The applicant then brings to the court the Statement of Arrangements for Child as completed by the applicant and respondent.*

The form is detailed and complex and in addition is a major cause of concern for parents with literacy problems.

CASE STUDY NO. 2

What happens when a parent no longer qualifies for One-Parent Family Payment ?

A worker from a Citizens Information Centre contacted Treoir with a social welfare query. A single mother had phoned him regarding a letter she had received from the Department of Social Protection. The letter informed the mother that her One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) would cease shortly, as she was no longer eligible for the payment because her child was about to turn 7 years of age. The mother was working and getting a Family Income Supplement (FIS) payment in addition to OFP. The worker was enquiring about what would happen when the OFP ceased. The Information Officer explained that the mother's FIS payment would automatically be increased when her OFP ceased.

Since July 2015 a parent can claim OFP until their youngest child reaches 7 years of age (there are exceptions). A claimant's Family Income Supplement payment is generally reviewed once a year. Where a parent is getting OFP and FIS, their FIS payment is automatically increased to reflect the loss of the OFP when their youngest child reaches 7. However, the increase in FIS does not replace the amount of OFP that the mother was getting.

Caller enquired if the mother could still get FIS if she claimed Jobseeker's Transition Payment. Jobseeker's Transitional Payment is a means tested payment that allows a parent whose children are under 14 years to work over more than 3 days and keep Jobseeker's Transition Payment subject to a means test. The parent does not have to be available for and actively seeking full-time work as are the conditions for Jobseeker's Allowance. The Information Officer explained that FIS can be paid with OFP but you are not eligible for FIS if you are in receipt of Jobseeker's Transitional Payment or Jobseeker's Allowance.

CASE STUDY NO. 3

Mother stops father having access to their child.

T's child was 5 years old, he did not live with the child but he had regular contact with the child. He was paying weekly maintenance for the child from his social welfare payment. Recently T had moved in with his girlfriend. The mother of his child immediately stopped all his contact with his child. Caller asked could the mother do this. The Information Officer asked the father if he was a guardian of the child. He said he was a guardian, she then clarified with him how had he become a guardian. He said his name was on the birth certificate. The Information Officer informed him that a father's name on his child's birth certificate did not give the father any automatic legal rights to his child. She confirmed that he was not a guardian of the child and that there were no court orders in place for access to the child. The Information Officer discussed with T the various options available to him to get access to and guardianship of his child. She informed him that there were two ways for him to become a guardian. If he and the mother agreed they could sign the Statutory Declaration for Guardianship- (S.I. No. 5 of 1998) in the presence of a Peace Commissioner, Commissioner for Oaths or Solicitor.

There is no charge if a Peace Commissioner signs the Declaration. She informed him that his local Citizens Information Centre may have names of local Peace Commissioners. The Garda Station or Library may also have contact details. He thought it was very unlikely that the mother would agree to sign the declaration.

The Information Officer explored the option of he and the mother attending mediation to try and work out arrangements regarding access to the child etc.

If the mother does not agree to sign the Statutory Declaration, then he had no option but to apply to the court. The Information Officer informed the father that he would have to make two separate applications to the court: one for access and one for guardianship but both applications could be heard at the same hearing. T asked would he be entitled to Free Legal Aid as he was getting Jobseeker's Allowance. The Information Officer informed him that he should qualify for Legal Aid based on his income but it is not free. It is a means tested scheme and he would have to pay a minimum contribution of €130. She gave him contact details for his local Legal Aid office and for Family Mediation Services. She also informed him that he had the option of representing himself in court.

B. PUBLICATIONS

INFORMATION PACK FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS

The Information Pack for unmarried parents was published in July 2016. The Information Pack is Treoir's principal publication and is updated and published every year. It is funded by the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme. The Pack contains essential information for unmarried parents, their families and those working with unmarried parents, including information on access, custody, guardianship, crisis pregnancy, money during pregnancy and financial information following birth, child abduction, domestic violence etc.

In 2016, the Information Pack was updated to take account of legislative changes and 12,000 copies were printed. Multiple copies were distributed to the maternity hospitals, Citizens Information Centres, Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Agencies, and other outlets.

The Pack is sent out on request and is available to view and download from the Treoir website. www.treoir.ie

The Pack continues to be a hugely popular resource for both unmarried families and those working with unmarried families.

INFORMATION LEAFLETS

Certain provisions of the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015 were commenced on the 18th of January 2016. A great deal of work was undertaken in preparing and updating Treoir Information Leaflets which explained in detail the radical changes to family law introduced in the Act. Nine leaflets were updated and published in April 2016. The quantities printed were as follows:

- 15,000 **Guardianship**
- 15,000 **Access and Custody**
- 15,000 **Maintenance**
- 5,000 **Unmarried Fathers**
- 5,000 **Passports**
- 5,000 **Cohabiting Parents**
- 5,000 **Establishing Paternity**
- 5,000 **International Child Abduction**
- 5,000 **Step-Parent Adoption**

The leaflets give more in depth information on the legal issues addressed in the Information Pack. The leaflets were widely distributed and multiple copies were delivered to all Citizens Information Centres, Citizens Information Services, Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Agencies and to all maternity hospitals. They are available to view and download from the Treoir website www.treoir.ie

"We would be grateful if you will send us a selection of all of your "up-to-date" Booklets and Leaflets. We frequently refer our Clients to your website and we often contact you when we are in need of assistance or specific up to date information. However, it is a great help to be able to give Clients a leaflet or booklet which explains the up-to-date position relating to their particular circumstances".

(Request from worker in Citizens Information Centre August 2016)

C. WEBSITE

People spending periods of time (defined as ‘sessions’ by Google Analytics) on treoir.ie. have increased by 18% in 2016 compared to 2015. Individual ‘Users’ **increased by 17%** from 65,787 Users in 2015 to 77,119 Users in 2016. **Page Views** increased by **18.93%** from 164,178 in 2015 to 195,260 in 2016. This may be the result of linking Treoir content to Google Ads Words – the grant for which was secured by Treoir in 2015. This means that, when people search with key words on Google, there is a higher chance of Treoir content being found and shown by Google.

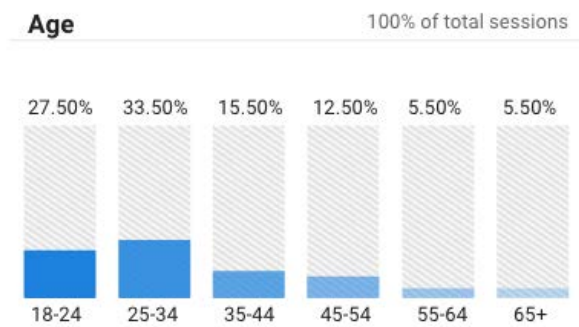
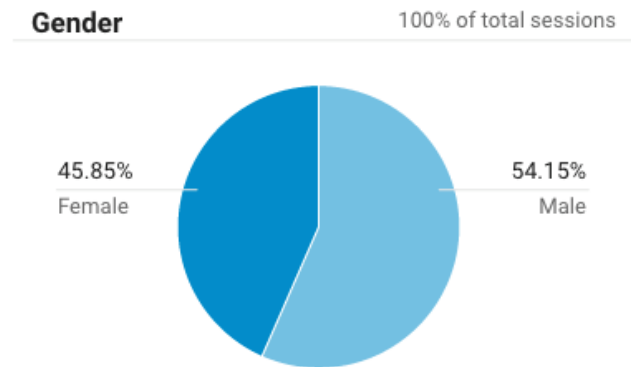
An interesting development is that visits to treoir.ie content targeting **Grandparents increased by 112%** from 2,813 page views in 2015 to 5,964 in 2016. This may be explained by the changes in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 which allows for guardianship of children by grandparents in specified circumstances.

Visits to treoir.ie content targeting **Fathers increased by 31%** from 23,954 page views in 2015 to 31,446 in 2016. Again, this may be attributed to the changes in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 which allows for automatic Guardianship of children by unmarried fathers in specified circumstances.

The only target group content that showed a decrease in page views in 2016 is content targeted to **Mothers** which **decreased in page views by 28%** from 8,362 visits to 5,964 visits. This may be due to the key words used in a search. The majority of phone contact made during 2016 was made by ‘unmarried mothers’ enquiring about ‘Guardianship’ and ‘Access’ so it may be that mothers are typing in these two keywords and landing on this content on Treoir.ie rather than the dedicated landing page targeted to ‘**Mothers**’.

Website Visits

Profile of treoir.ie visitors



Devices that visitors are accessing Treoir.ie

The data indicates 57% of people are viewing Treoir.ie content on non-PC devices. Currently Treoir.ie content is formatted for PC viewing. Treoir will investigate the benefits of website functional and design enhancements in 2017 to offer our target audience a better user experience.

D. OUTREACH

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

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

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

In addition, workshops are tailored to respond to the needs of individual groups.

In 2016 Treoir provided 41 workshops to groups throughout the country.

The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 radically changed family law. There was an unprecedented demand for information workshops on the implications of the legislation following its commencement. Treoir delivered 37 workshops to groups of workers / volunteers who provide services to unmarried families and their extended families.

Treoir provided 13 of these workshops throughout the country to Tusla staff and to workers in projects supported by Tusla.

A further 11 workshops were delivered to staff and volunteers in Citizens Information Centres.

Thirteen workshops were also attended by a wide range of other service providers for whom this new information is essential. These included hospital social workers, crisis pregnancy counsellors, workers from community and youth services, Family Resource Centres, staff and volunteers in Women's Aid, workers in a refuge for women and children and others providing accommodation services to homeless parents.

In addition, four workshops were attended by groups of parents in a variety of settings, including fathers and mothers participating in local training/education programmes, parents in Family Resource Centres and fathers participating in a parenting course at an Education Training Board Centre.

Workshops took place in the following locations:

Clare	Clonmel	Cork
Dublin	Dungarvan	Galway
Kerry	Limerick	Longford
Louth	Maynooth	Newbridge
Sligo	Waterford	

The workshops were attended by 670 people. Participants were briefed on the provisions of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which were commenced on the 18th January 2016.

These provisions relate primarily to guardianship, custody, access and maintenance. The main provisions that came into effect include the following:

AUTOMATIC GUARDIANSHIP

A non-marital father will automatically become the guardian of his child if he lives with the child's mother for at least 12 consecutive months including not less than 3 months after the child's birth. The three months period does not have to take place directly after the birth of the child. It can be fulfilled any time before the child turns 18 provided that it is part of the 12 consecutive months during which the parents have lived together.

Until now non-marital fathers have never been automatic guardians of their child.

The cohabitation requirement is not retrospective: Only cohabitation after the commencement date will be taken into account. The Act was commenced on the 18th January 2016.

NON-PARENTAL GUARDIANSHIP

A person other than a parent may become a child's guardian. A person will be able to apply to the court to be appointed as a child's guardian if the person is married to, is in a civil partnership with or has cohabitated with the child's parent for over 3 years and in each case has shared responsibility for the child's day-to-day care for more than 2 years.

It will also be possible for the court to appoint a person as a child's guardian if that person has been responsible for the child's day-to-day care for over 12 months and if the child has no parent or guardian who is willing or able to exercise the rights and responsibilities of guardianship.

These guardians will generally have restricted powers limited to decisions on day-to-day matters.

TEMPORARY GUARDIANSHIP

It will be possible for a parent who is a guardian and has custody of a child to nominate a person to act as a temporary guardian in the event of the parent becoming incapable of exercising the rights and responsibilities of guardianship through serious illness or injury. The nominated person can apply to the court to act as a guardian if the parent subsequently becomes incapacitated. The appointment will be subject to the court's approval. Each parent, guardian and TUSLA will be on notice of such an application.

CUSTODY

The Act allows relatives and certain other persons to apply for custody of a child.

ACCESS

The Act makes it easier for grandparents and other relatives to have access to a child.

PARENTING

The Act creates new enforcement procedures in relation to custody and access to ensure that both parents can have a meaningful relationship with their child even if the relationship breaks down.

MAINTENANCE

The Act allows the court to order payment of maintenance by the cohabitant of a child's parent for the support of the child. This potential liability can arise only when the cohabiting partner is a guardian of the child.

FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

“Just to say thank you for a fantastic workshop and great hospitality in Dublin last Thursday.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to attend the Focus on Fathers Workshop and found it hugely beneficial with the ideal balance between the update on legislation/information/rights and an actual insight into the Dads themselves, not an easy task but it was well done!

It was also fantastic to meet with others working in the field and make new connections, as well as leaving with a brand new information pack and up-to date resources. Thank you!”

(email from Focus on Fathers Workshop Participant, May 2016)

“Thank you for accepting our invitation to come to Women’s Aid to deliver a talk to our Helpline volunteers on the evening of the 27th June from 6pm to 9pm. We welcome your input around the Treoir Service as well as the many issues facing families today with particular reference to new Child and Family Relationship Act.”

(email from Helpline Manager, Women’s Aid)

“Can you please add me to your mailing list. Also a big thank you to Veronica who gave us a brilliant briefing in Clonmel yesterday on rights of unmarried fathers, Children and Family Relationships Act, guardianship of children-to name but a few of the topics she covered.”

(email from CFSN Coordinator, TUSLA, September 2016)

“As you know we had this training in Longford last week...I just wanted to let you know that the feedback from all in attendance was just excellent. Veronica Black delivered an “off the cuff” presentation (no powerpoint) which was exceptional.

I am copying her on this mail should any of you wish to make contact and arrange a training in your own service obviously subject to her availability. “

(email from CIS Development Manager October 2016)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT / RESEARCH

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

POLICY

Treoir advocated on behalf of unmarried parents and their children in 2016 through influencing family legislation, developing policy programmes informed by queries from Treoir's National Specialist Information Service and working to promote the right of children to have a relationship with both parents where possible.

Treoir principles:

- recognises the diversity of family life in Ireland
- recognises that all families, including unmarried families, have the same rights to respect, care, support, protection and recognition
- supports and promotes the rights of all children as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- believes that all children have a right to know, be loved and cared for by both parents*

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

In 2016 Treoir made two pre-budget submissions:

- Pre-Budget Submission 2017 to the Department of Finance
- Pre-Budget Submission 2017 to the Department of Social Protection

Pre-budget 2017 submission to the Department of Finance

In Budget 2014, the Minister for Finance abolished the One Parent Family Tax Credit (OPFTC) and replaced it with the Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit (SPCTC) which is available only to the primary carer or the carer in receipt of Child Benefit. The SPCTC could be transferred by the primary carer, usually the mother, if she could not avail of it, to the secondary carer (usually the father) who could avail of it subject to the child being in his care for at least 100 days in the year.

Based on the experience of those contacting Treoir's Specialist Information Centre, secondary carers (usually fathers) are not able to avail of this tax credit because the primary carer refuses to relinquish it. Father's incomes have dropped significantly as a result of this budgetary discriminatory measure which is not in the child's best interest.

Summary of Recommendations made to the Department of Finance:

- Make the Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit available automatically to the qualifying secondary carer when the primary carer does not claim it
- Review the operation of the Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit to ascertain whether it can be improved to maximize the benefit for those concerned.

Treoir welcomed some features of Budget 2016, however a subsequent analysis of Budget 2016 by experts at The Economic and Social Research Institute confirmed that the changes would have little impact on the poorest in society with child poverty in one-parent families increasing dramatically.

Pre-budget 2017 submission to the Department of Social Protection

Summary of Recommendations made to the Department of Social Protection:

- Reinstate the supports for one-parent families in order to address the current high rates of child poverty
- At a minimum, social welfare payments and the associated secondary payments should not be cut or reduced
- Extend Family Income Supplement (FIS) to lone parents in receipt of Jobseekers Transitional Payment subject to certain criteria
- Review working hours eligibility of FIS to align it with current trends on part-time working arrangements
- Introduce additional interim measures for lone parents in part-time employment who cannot increase their hours to avail of FIS
- Allow for flexibility in the payment of FIS in the event of changes of income or working hours for short periods
- Apply the same Income Limits for the Back to School and Footwear Allowance to lone parents or couples (similar to FIS)
- Extend the eligibility of the Widowed or Surviving Civil Partner Grant to cohabitants and to other surviving guardian who have one or more dependent children living with them
- Monitor rent supplement allowance limits every six months in areas of high demand and adjust accordingly
- Allow people who transfer from Rent Supplement to the Housing Assistance Payment to remain in the social housing list, rather than removing them, which is a disincentive if there are concerns about longer-term security of tenure.
- Reinstate Bin Waiver Schemes for One Parent Family Payment recipients
- Grant lone parents in full-time education the Back to Education Allowance
- Review the eligibility rules of the SUSI grant to better facilitate lone parents' care duties
- Introduce a single childcare subvention scheme for single parents who need childcare for children aged up to 12 years in order to participate in education, training and work.
- Introduce additional good quality after-school childcare to support lone parents.

TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Strategic Objective: Treoir will support those working with young parents in Ireland

TPSP CO-ORDINATION AND SUPPORT

During 2016, Treoir achieved this Strategic Objective mainly through the post of National Coordinator of the Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) which is based in Treoir. The main purpose of this post is to provide a central focal point for the promotion of the work of the TPSP and the enhancement of the lives of all young parents including those living outside areas covered by a TPSP.

The TPSP consists of eleven separate projects located throughout the country in a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations. The projects, which are funded by Tusla and the HSE, work with young people who become parents when they are aged 19 years or under and, where needed, support them until their children are 2 years of age. The TPSP provides mainly early interventions which enhance and support the wellbeing of young parents and their children, empower young parents in their parenting role and ensure equality of opportunity for parent and child. During 2016, the TPSP supported 906 young parents, their children and families.

During 2016, the National Coordinator continued to support the 11 TPSP projects as well as other professionals working with young parents.

This was achieved mainly through:

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

TPSP Meetings

To ensure cohesion and the flow of communication among all strands of the TPSP structure, in 2016 two separate meetings were organized for all TPSP staff, TPSP Employing Organisations and the TPSP National Advisory Committee. The Coordinator followed up issues raised at these meetings such as Home Tuition, childcare and aspects of the supplementary welfare system.

Policy and advocacy

One of the other main ways in which the TPSP supports all young parents in Ireland is through advocating on their behalf. During 2016, this was achieved mainly through a combination of written submissions and contact with key policy makers in relevant government departments and agencies. Submissions included:

- The TPSP Pre-budget Submission 2017
- A proposal regarding the Affordable Childcare Scheme
- A proposal to re-structure the Home Tuition Scheme for Maternity Related Absences.

The TPSP also had direct contact with:

- Tusla Education Welfare Services
- The Home Tuition Section of the Department of Education & Skills
- The Equity of Access Section of the Higher Education Authority and
- The Early Years Unit of the Department of Children & Youth Affairs.

The TPSP National Coordinator also represents the needs of teen parents and unmarried parents on The Parenting Network facilitated by the Centre for Effective Services.

In terms of policy and advocacy, in 2016 the TPSP's main success was the almost total re-structuring by the Department of Education & Skills of the conditions attached to the Home Tuition Scheme for Maternity Related Absences. The original terms of the Scheme allowed pregnant and parenting students 9 hours of Home Tuition per week for a block of 10 weeks immediately before and after the birth of the baby. It was not possible to carry over unused hours from one week to the next. The mother was not allowed to attend school while availing of the Home Tuition Scheme. This excluded her from classes in the sciences, art or music where students need access to science labs and other school facilities. Tuition had to take place during school hours (when most subject teachers are unavailable) and could not take place during holidays or mid-term breaks when teachers are free.

Under the new conditions the mother may avail of 90 hours of Home Tuition spread over 6 months according to her needs. Students may now attend school part-time while availing of the Home Tuition Scheme. They may also get Tuition both during and outside of school hours as well as during school holidays and mid-term breaks.

The new more flexible conditions will help pregnant and parenting students in several ways. They can now maintain a link with their schools (including school-based supports) making it easier for them to eventually re-engage with education full-time. It is hoped that the removal of restrictions will increase take-up of the Scheme and increase the supply of tutors which can make the difference between completing one's education or becoming an early school leaver. Finally, those returning to exam classes will be able to get extra tuition over the Summer months to prepare them for re-entry.

These changed conditions are the outcome of several years of persistent advocacy by TPSP to make the Scheme respond realistically to the experience and needs of pregnant and parenting students.

Promoting the voice of the TPSP has also ensured that TPSP staff and participants are consulted in major pieces of research to do with young people and young parents such as the Sexual Health and Sexuality Education Needs Assessment of Young People in Care in Ireland Study (SENYPIC) commissioned by the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme and published in 2016.

The TPSP National Coordinator also contributed to a Review of the Barriers to Third Level Education experienced by lone parents which was commissioned jointly by the Department of Education & Skills, the Department of Children & Youth Affairs and the Department of Children & Youth affairs and carried out by NUI Maynooth.

The Coordinator also contributed to the Review of its Equity of Access Plan 2015-2019 by the Higher Education Authority.

Reporting to Tusla

In addition to responding to queries on an ongoing basis, in 2016 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 TPSP staff and dissemination of TPSP expertise

The National Coordinator arranges training for TPSP staff in response to identified needs. For example, in April 2016, Veronica Black, Treoir's Information and Training Officer, delivered an Information Workshop in relation to the implications of the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015 for service users of the TPSP. In 2016, Veronica also gave an input on the Act to the National Advisory Committee of the TPSP.

During 2016, the TPSP organized two workshops targeting all those working with young parents. 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. These workshops were 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, 32 non-TPSP workers have completed this training.

In 2016, the TPSP also organized a Workshop based on The TPSP Toolkit. The TPSP Toolkit, which was funded by the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, brings together in one resource manual, the knowledge, skills and experience of TPSP staff focusing on what are the distinct needs of teen parents. This was the 10th Toolkit Workshop organised by TPSP bringing to 140 the number of professionals working in non-TPSP areas who have availed of it. These include youth workers, social workers, family support workers, aftercare workers, staff in family resource centres, crisis pregnancy counsellors, 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.

TPSP Website

The TPSP website (www.tpsp.ie) was updated regularly with items of interest to young parents and those involved with them. In 2016, there were 63,925 viewings of the website.

The Cooordinator also acts as a source of information, advice and guidance for professionals working with young parents in areas where there is not a TPSP and directs them to other appropriate services. She also responds to queries from pregnant and parenting teen and their parents/guardians from areas where there is not a TPSP.

RAISING AWARENESS / PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

Press Releases

Treoir issued press releases in 2016 **relating to the following:**

The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015

Treoir welcomed the commencement of significant sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 as well as stating concern that “...*basing guardianship rights of unmarried Dads on cohabitation denies significant numbers of children the right to have two guardians and excludes many fathers from their child's life.*” Margaret Dromey

The Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2016

Treoir welcomed the publication of the Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2016

‘Treoir welcomes the many positive changes proposed in the bill, in particular, the provision allowing step-parent adoption without the requirement for the biological parent to adopt his or her own child’ Greg Straton

Budget 2017

Treoir welcomed some measures in Budget 2017 that could make a positive difference for many including:

- € increase in all weekly social welfare payments in line with state pension
- Christmas bonus for those on social welfare will rise to 85%
- Medical card for all children who receive domiciliary care allowance
- New Single Affordable Childcare Scheme from September 2017 for children between six months and 15 years and universal subsidies for all children aged six months to three years Early Years funding to rise by 35% to €465m
- €36.5m increase in funding for higher and further education.

Marking Forty Years

In December 2016 Treoir celebrated four decades of contributing to significant legislative and policy changes in Ireland. Unmarried families still face discrimination in our laws and procedures. The increasing prevalence of births outside of marriage, greater tolerance for social change and the increased complexity of modern family types make Treoir's mission more relevant than ever.

Access the online version of Treoir's publication at: www.treoir.ie

"Treoir - Towards Equality for Unmarried Parents and Their Children 1976- 2016 - a history of the first 40 years of Treoir The Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and Their Children."

The Home Tuition Scheme for Maternity Related Absences

During 2016 the Department of Education and Skills made very significant changes to conditions attached to the Home Tuition Scheme for Maternity Related Absences. These changes were the result of advocacy by the TPSP whose National Coordinator is based in Treoir and is in line with Treoir's Strategic commitment to support young parents and those working with them. Further details of the new conditions attached to the Scheme can be found in the TPSP Section.



Emilia Marchelewska, Cairde and
Greg Straton CEO Treoir

Emilia gave a presentation on the
issue of Migrant Women and Crisis
Pregnancy



Participants at the Treoir outreach
workshop in Longford Citizens
Information Service, October 2016

GOVERNANCE

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

The Council of Treoir places great value on good governance of the organisation and compliance with all company and charity legislation. Treoir is compliant with the Code of Governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector and continually reviews and updates its processes and procedures in line with good practice. In 2016, Treoir began the process of amending its Memorandum and Articles of Association to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Companies Act, 2014 and the Charities Regulatory Authority.



Ruth Barrington, Chair, Christina Hughes, Treasurer, Thomas Quigley, Vice-Chair, Greg Straton, CEO at Treoir AGM 2016



Siobhan Roddy, Secretary, Christina Hughes, Treasurer, Ruth Barrington, Chair, Greg Straton, CEO at Treoir's AGM 2016

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

**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE
CAPITAL)**

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2016

**TREOIR THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SERVICES FOR UNMARRIED
PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE
CAPITAL)
DETAILED TRADING AND INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2016**

	2016	2015
	€	€
Income		
HSE Dublin CH09	225,719	225,725
Tusla Kilkenny	15,910	7,000
Tusla Cork	-	8,910
Tusla Dublin North City	-	6,274
HSE Crisis Pregnancy Prog	187,000	184,384
Membership fees	130	1,535
Citizens Information Board	37,121	34,400
Sale of Publications	126	98
Outreach	80	467
Other Income	-	20
	<u>466,086</u>	<u>468,813</u>
Administrative expenses	<u>(447,833)</u>	<u>(447,343)</u>
Operating surplus	<u><u>18,253</u></u>	<u><u>21,470</u></u>

**TREOIR THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SERVICES FOR UNMARRIED
PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE
CAPITAL)
SCHEDULE OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2016**

	2016	2015
	€	€
Administrative expenses		
Wages and salaries	275,622	273,328
Social security costs	29,127	28,923
Staff training	1,108	786
Staff pension costs defined contribution	16,731	24,944
Rent and rates	49,732	49,719
Cleaning	2,566	2,051
Power, light and heat	2,478	2,425
Property repairs and maintenance	874	1,862
Premises insurance	1,250	1,250
Supplies	4,403	3,270
Membership	270	640
Newspapers	837	672
Hospitality	3,425	3,251
Publishing	12,709	7,425
Travelling expenses	5,008	3,978
Conferences / meetings	8,442	5,911
Legal and professional fees	9,086	19,373
Accountancy	3,137	554
Audit fees	3,125	3,125
Bank charges	230	227
Printing and stationery	4,811	5,135
Advertising	2,066	940
Telecommunications	6,971	6,974
Sundry expenses	616	130
Depreciation	3,209	450
	<u>447,833</u>	<u>447,343</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.

In addition, we would like to thank Google for their annual AdWords in-kind advertising grant to promote Treoir's Specialist Information Service on Google search result pages.

We thank Dr. Geoffrey Shannon and Dr. Fergus Ryan for their willingness to help clarify complex legal issues for Treoir for no financial gain.

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

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

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