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Fathers still haven't woken up!

Many fathers mistakenly believe that because their name is on their child's birth cert they have rights to their child.

At the Annual General Meeting of Treoir, Leonie Lunny, chairwoman of Treoir noted the critical role that information can play for unmarried parents and their children and, in particular, the importance of fathers being aware of their legal position. Many fathers mistakenly believe that because their name is on their child's birth certificate they have rights to their child. Several court cases have been reported recently involving fathers who have had their children removed from them, sometimes to another country. As these fathers were not guardians, nor had initiated guardianship proceedings, the mothers were not breaking any law by removing the children.

These cases and numerous queries to Treoir's National Information Centre clearly point to the need for accurate, easily accessible information. Treoir endeavours to provide this but the message must be conveyed that fathers need to be proactive in securing guardianship, preferably by agreement with the mother (out of court) .

Of the 9,000 calls received in 2009 in the Treoir National Information Centre, 24% were from fathers and 38% were from mothers and pregnant women. The remainder were from family members and service providers. Twenty one per cent of calls were concerned with guardianship, 28% with access/custody and a further 29% related to other legal/parenting queries. Interestingly, 34% of callers were in the 30 – 39 age group with only 23% under 25 years.

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