



The National Federation of Services for  
Unmarried Parents and their Children

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2013



## 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, 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:***

1. 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

2. manages the national co-ordination of the Teen Parents Support Programme

3. advocates on behalf of unmarried parents and their children.

## COUNCIL

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Dearbhla Ní Riordáin, Vice- Chair

Christina Hughes, Secretary

Thomas Quigley, Treasurer

CUH Social Work Dept,

Miss Carr's Home  
Housing Assoc.  
Bessborough Care  
Centre

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Limerick Social  
Services Council

Anne Egan

NUI Galway

Louise Graham

Cura National Office

Mary McCarthy

Life Pregnancy Care

Mary McGovern

HSE Section 20 Office

Ciara McKenna

National Maternity  
Hospital

Marie Naughton

Here-to-Help

Siobhan Roddy

Doras Buí

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Dearbhla Ní Riordáin (Chair), Ruth Barrington, Christina Hughes,  
Thomas Quigley, Siobhan Roddy

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University Hospital

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Doras Buí

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Home-Start

Life Pregnancy Care

Limerick Social Services

Miss Carr's Home -

Housing Association

National Maternity Hosp

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Mary Immaculate College

Sligo Social Service

St. Anne's Day Nursery

St. Catherine's Community  
Services

The Base Youth Service

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Margot Doherty

Margaret Morris

Brenda Forde

Veronica Black

Beatrice Cronin

Bella Maher

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Chief Executive Officer

Assistant Chief Executive

National Co-ordinator, TPSP

Senior Information Officer

Information Officer

Dissemination / Information Officer

Office Manager

Office Assistant

## HONORARY MEMBERS

Dermot Walsh

Gemma Rowley

Honorary President

Honorary Life Member

# FOREWORD

Ruth Barrington  
May 2014

I am pleased to present this, my first annual report as Chair of Treoir.

A great deal of progress has been made towards implementing the Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016, despite funding cutbacks. I would like to compliment my predecessor as Chair of Treoir, Leonie Lunny, for her contribution to this progress and to her skilled leadership of the Council.

There have been significant developments at a national level in the past few years in relation to advancing the rights of and improving the care of children - thanks in the main to the work of the former Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. The Children's Referendum, the publication of the Children First (Hearings) Bill 2012, and the initiation of Túsla – the Child and Family Agency are all part of this development. A briefing note on Children and Family Relationships legislation was also published. Treoir welcomes these developments and is eager to promote the best interests of all children but particularly children in unmarried families.

Some policies have been implemented which have adversely affected one-parent families. The reduction in the income disregard for One-parent Family recipients (OFP), removing entitlement to OFP when the youngest child reaches 7 years and the cessation of the One Parent Family Tax Credit have all put extra pressure on one parent families. The data from Wave 1 of the Growing Up in Ireland study, "*See How They Grow*" by Dr. Owen Corrigan, commissioned by Treoir, indicates that solo, unmarried mothers have lower levels of education than other mothers. A lack of childcare made it significantly more difficult for solo parents to join the workforce or engage in study/training in comparison to married parents. There is major work to be undertaken to support solo mothers to improve their levels of education so that they can take up meaningful employment.

Governance in the NGO/charity sector has been very much to the fore. While many NGOs have practiced good governance for years, accountability has now become, rightly, more stringent. Treoir has always adhered to all legal obligations and a strong commitment was made in the Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016 to ensure good governance. Treoir is now fully compliant with the Code of Governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

I am fortunate to work with a dedicated and enthusiastic Council, who give of their time, experience and ideas generously, and I thank them for that. Margaret Dromey, the CEO works tirelessly, and efficiently to lead the Treoir team in spite of the major challenges Treoir faces today. My compliments also to all the staff, who, despite reductions in salaries, remain committed to the objectives of Treoir.

# NOTE FROM THE CEO

Margaret Dromey  
May 2014

The summary of activities outlined in the Annual Report is testament to the productive work undertaken by the Council and staff of Treoir in 2013.

We bade farewell to our Chair Leonie Lunny following four constructive years at the helm. We were delighted to welcome Dr. Ruth Barrington as our new Chair. Ruth has been a friend of Treoir's for many years, particularly in terms of assisting with the promotion of a National Longitudinal Study of Children, which resulted in the national Growing Up in Ireland Study.

During 2013 Treoir published "See How They Grow", a report using Growing Up in Ireland data on 11,134 infants, funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme. This provided excellent baseline data on unmarried parents and their children when the children were nine months old. The follow-on study, when the children were three years old, commissioned by Treoir in 2013, will be published in 2014.

Treoir developed a sophisticated new database of users of Treoir services, which has facilitated a detailed analysis of the calls to the Centre. Many of these calls are extremely complex as the queries impact on many areas of family life. A great deal of expertise has developed over the years and as CEO I am very confident that the quality of service provided by the information team is second to none.

A major achievement in 2013 was the development of the TPSP Toolkit - a valuable resource for those working with pregnant or parenting teenagers based on the expertise gleaned and developed over 10 years of the Teen Parents Support Programme.

An exciting awareness raising campaign was hosted early in 2013. The purpose of this campaign was to inform unmarried expectant parents of the services and resources which are available to them. Treoir is committed to addressing these areas of misinformation among unmarried parents, their families and those working with them.

We very much value the engagement of the member organisations of Treoir. It is particularly important in bringing to our attention, or confirming the issues of concern to unmarried parents and their children. Being alert to the key issues helps us determine the policy agenda of Treoir.

I want to sincerely thank my colleagues for their commitment and dedication to the work of Treoir and for their forbearance in the face of significant cuts over the past few years.

I am most thankful to have an excellent Council. Members willingly share their expertise, wisdom and time and are very supportive of the staff. In particular I want to thank the Council for their overall guidance and their commitment to good governance.

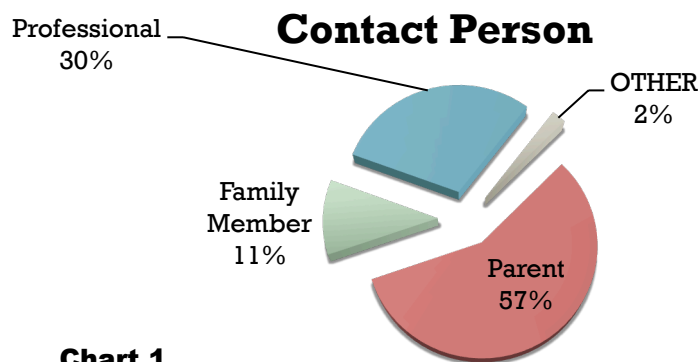
# NATIONAL SPECIALIST INFORMATION SERVICE

**Treoir will maintain and develop the national specialist information service for unmarried parents, same or opposite sex, expectant parents, parents living together or apart, their extended families and those working with them**

## Calls to the National Information Centre

There were approximately 7,200 queries dealt with by the Treoir Information Service in 2013. The busiest month for the information team was May followed by September and the quietest month was December followed by June. The majority of queries were received by telephone at 84% and the remainder by e-mail, Facebook and by clients calling into Treoir's offices.

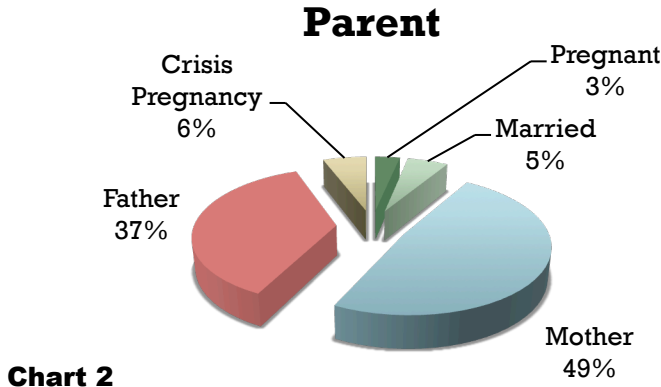
In 57% of cases the query was made directly by parents or expectant parents and 30% by professionals (See **Chart 1**). Queries from professionals contacting our Service were in the main made by those working with organisations offering family supports such as Family Resource Centres and others working specifically with young parents among others. Treoir received many calls from the Citizens Information Service and from health professionals including counsellors, mediators, maternity hospitals, social workers, HSE workers, doctors and from the legal profession.





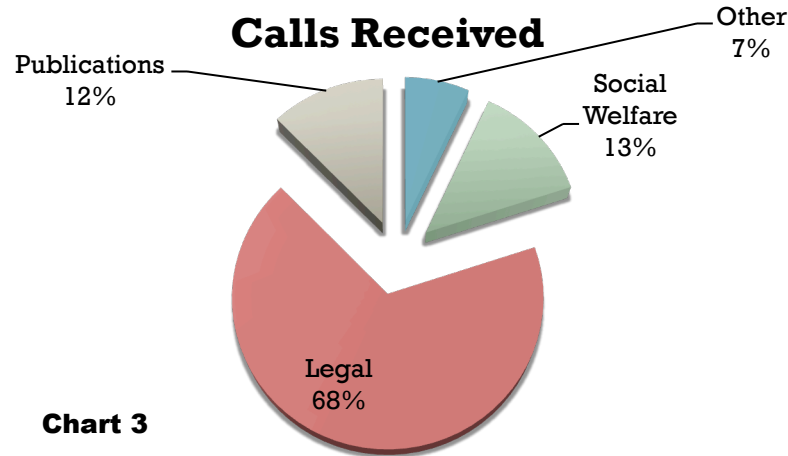
Of parents contacting Treoir the majority were mothers at 49% followed by fathers at 37%. Looking at Treoir's website hits, it is interesting to note that the most visited area on our website is the 'fathers' section. The 37% of fathers in Chart 2 below includes 'expectant fathers'.

Of family members contacting Treoir the majority were paternal grandparents at 46% followed by maternal grandparents at 29%. Others were in the main partners, aunts and uncles. Most of the queries made by grandparents related to access issues for the grandparents themselves or very often the grandparent made the call on behalf of their own adult child, particularly where the adult child was a young father having issues in relation to matters such as access, guardianship, maintenance etc.



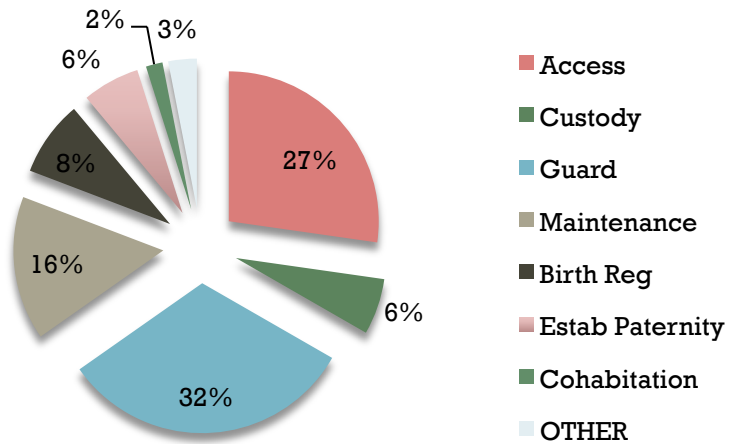
**Chart 2**

The majority of calls dealt with were in relation to legal matters at 68%, followed by social welfare queries at 13% (**See Chart 3**). Legal issues dealt with involved in the main guardianship at 32% followed by access and maintenance and other legal issues to a lesser extent (**see Chart 4**). Guardianship queries are often very complex and involve issues such as consent to medical matters, issues around school, abduction etc. The information officers continue to report a significant amount of misinformation in relation to guardianship rights for unmarried fathers. It is a commonly held belief that a father has guardianship rights by virtue of having his name on his child's birth certificate. This is an issue that Treoir endeavours to address at every opportunity in awareness raising campaigns, contact with other organisations and contact with media, etc.



**Chart 3**

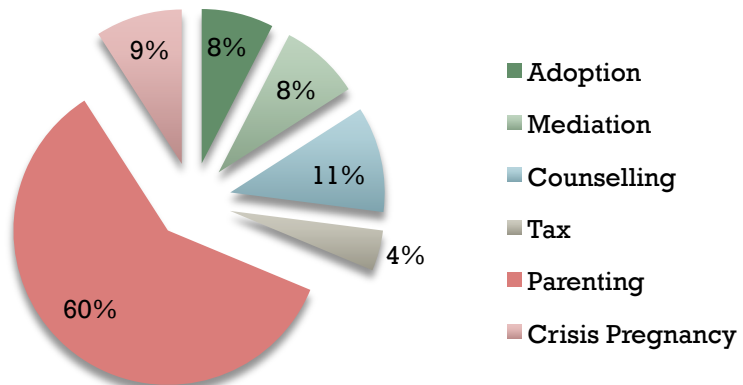
## Legal Queries



**Chart 4**

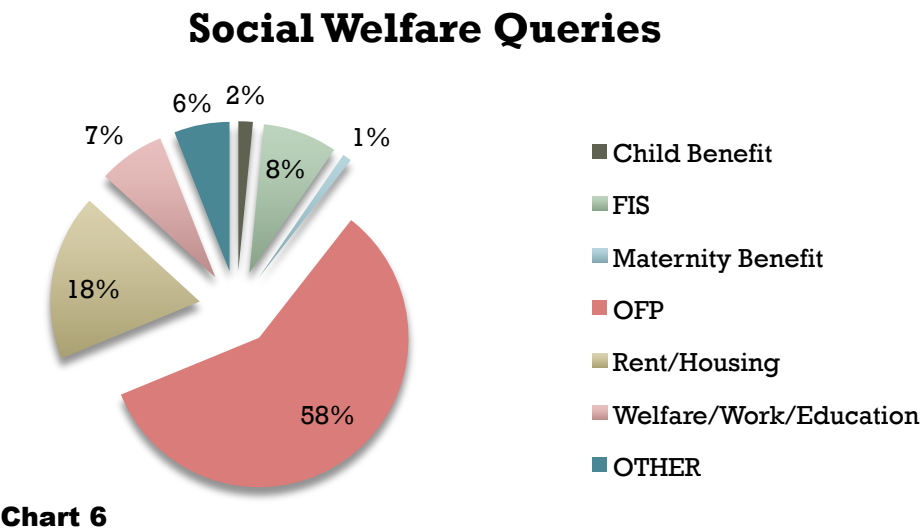
**Chart 5** below shows a breakdown of 'other' queries. Sixty per cent of queries were in relation to parenting issues. Many of these callers asked about access or guardianship but this developed into discussions around shared parenting and informing clients of alternative dispute resolutions as a way of avoiding court procedures.

## Other Queries



**Chart 5**

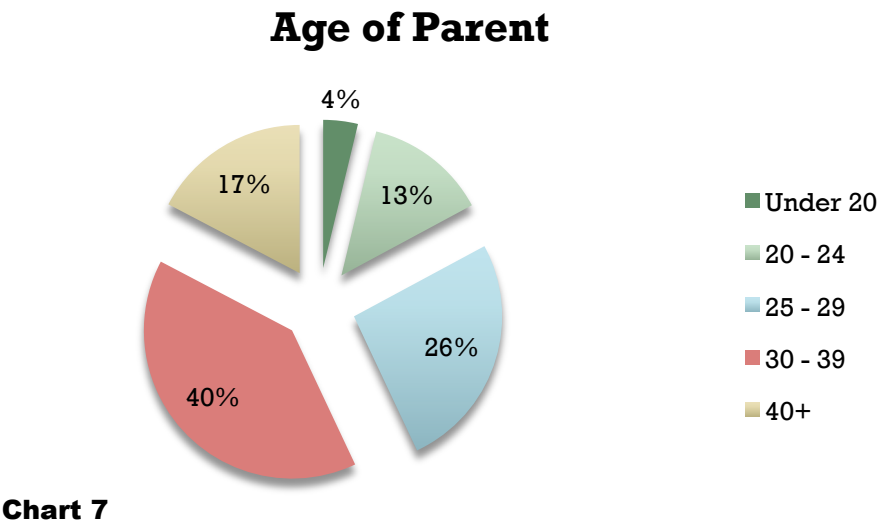
**Chart 6** below shows a breakdown of the types of social welfare queries dealt with by the Treoir Information Service. The majority of these were in relation to One-parent Family Payment (OFP). We expect to continue to receive significant numbers of queries in relation to One-parent Family Payment due to changes in relation to this Payment introduced in Budget 2012 whereby the recipient of OFP must have at least one qualified child below the relevant age limit. This age limit reduces for all to age 7 by July 2015.



### Age of parents

Where appropriate, parents are asked what age group they fell into.

**Chart 7** below shows the age of parents contacting the service.



## Location of caller

The majority of calls received were from clients living in Dublin followed by, and in order, Cork, Kildare, Galway, Wexford, Meath, Limerick, Kerry etc. Eighty four per cent of callers were Irish.

### Case Study

*Paul (not his real name) is a guardian of his child. His ex-partner took his 3-year-old son on holidays to Poland. He has just found out that she has decided not to come back to Ireland. He is devastated at the prospect of not seeing his son. He said he had been on good terms with his son's mother and cannot understand how she could do this. He asked if there was anything that he could do to get his son back.*

*It was explained that under Irish law it is an offence for a parent or guardian to take a child under 16 years out of the State in defiance of a court order or without the consent of the other parent, if that parent is a guardian. Paul had already got his guardianship rights by signing a statutory instrument for joint guardianship with the consent of the mother. He was informed that he can, therefore apply to the Irish Central Authority for Child Abduction to request to have his child returned to Ireland.*

## Cohabitation

Fifty four per cent of parents said that they were cohabiting. Of these, 48% stated that they were cohabiting with the other parent.

## Number of children

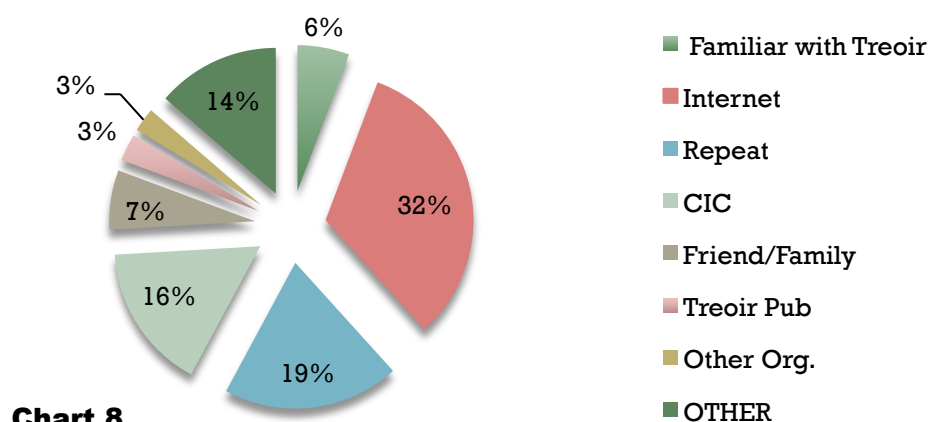
Half of the parents who contacted the National Information Service had one child. Thirty-two per cent had 2 children and the remainder 3 or more.

### Case Study

*A CIC worker telephoned who had a couple with her who have signed the S.I. Form No 5 of 1998 for joint guardianship rights and want to know where to send it. It was explained that there is no central register for guardianship forms and the father should keep it in a safe place, as it is the only proof that he is a guardian of his child.*

**Chart 8** below shows how clients first heard about Treoir. Nineteen per cent of calls were repeat calls.

**"How did you hear about us"**



### **Case Studies**

*A Nigerian mother telephoned to say that she had taken her eight-month-old child to the local hospital and they had kept the child indicating that the child had been abused. She did not have good English. She was asked to sign forms for voluntary care and assessment but didn't know what to do.*

*The Information officer secured the names of two Nigerian solicitors and passed these on to the mother. She was also put in touch with the Migrant Rights Centre and the Immigrant Council of Ireland.*

\* \* \*

*A call was received from a grandmother whose son had died before the birth of his baby. He had married the mother very shortly before the birth. The mother has addiction problems and the child is being cared for by the maternal grandmother. The child is in the voluntary care of the HSE.*

*The mother is now threatening to take the child to Europe where her new boyfriend has got a job. She rarely visits her child. Both grandparents are distraught (Treoir also had a call from the other grandmother).*

*It was suggested that under Section 8 of the Guardianship of Infants Act the granny caring for the child may be able to apply to the local district court to take up the son's guardianship rights. She could also apply for joint custody and access as a person who had acted in loco parentis and therefore could make decisions in the child's best interest.*

*They were encouraged to make the HSE aware of the situation, as it is the appropriate authority to take action where the child is at risk. The HSE may also refer the case to their colleagues in Europe if the child is actually moved.*

## **Publications**

The Treoir Information Pack for Unmarried Parents was updated and 15,000 copies of the 2013 version were printed and disseminated widely to our clients, members, maternity hospitals, citizen information centres, family resource centres and health centres among others. The Pack continues to be a hugely popular resource for both unmarried families and those working with unmarried families.

The Treoir Information Leaflets were updated, printed, disseminated and made available on the Treoir website. Our publication 'Taking the Stand' a very popular guide for parents on resolving disputes regarding access, custody, guardianship or maintenance issues, is currently out of print and funding is being sought in order to update and reprint this publication. The publication is available to download from the Treoir website.

*"Your leaflets are great – they are like my little bibles!" ...client*

### Case Study

Frank, referred by a HSE social worker, telephoned about his situation. Betty is the mother of his two children. She also has two children from a previous marriage. The HSE has the children in respite foster care one weekend a month while mother has a break.

Frank lived with the family up until the middle of 2013 and he hasn't seen them since. He has asked the HSE to have the children for the weekend but the HSE said it could not facilitate this as it was against the mother's wishes.

Frank was informed that he could apply for joint guardianship and access rights in respect of his children through the Legal Aid Board. He was also informed that should he get any court order which names him as father he could use this to have his name entered in the Register of Births.

## Outreach

In 2013 Treoir delivered 25 outreach sessions, which were attended by 343 participants.

Treoir offers three different kinds of workshops - Legal rights of unmarried parents, including cohabiting parents, Shared parenting and explaining relationships, Work it out – Social Welfare Payments and Going back to Work / Education / Training. See [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) for details.

Thirteen workshops were provided to groups of workers, 10 workshops to groups of parents and 2 workshops to students.

Workshops took place in Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Limerick, Meath, Sligo, Waterford and Wicklow.

*"I just wanted to say thank you so much for yesterday's talk. The feedback from the lads was very positive and I had some approach me today on the back of the talk, so word has obviously got around. I really appreciate you taking time out from your busy schedule to come in and I am sure I will be in touch with you in the near future"....service provider*

Workshops were provided to groups of parents and workers in a variety of settings including in local training/education programmes, Teen Parents Support Programmes, Family and Community Resource Centres, rehabilitation day programmes for people in recovery from addiction, the prison services in Dublin and Co. Wicklow, HSE

One of the key issues identified by parents in the workshops was the need for clarification and information regarding changes introduced to **One-Parent Family Payment (OFP)**. Parents were confused and concerned about the changes to OFP and were seeking information on what options were available to them when they no longer qualified for OFP. The workshops presented an opportunity to explain the new changes and to provide information on the possible options available when their payment ends.

*"Thank you so much for yesterday's seminar – it was really informative and enjoyable, the interactive nature of the event making it even more valuable. Your time and expertise is really appreciated. I just wanted to send you an email and to thank you and especially Veronica Black for her brilliant help answering my questions"....service provider*

## Website

We endeavoured to maximise use of our website. It was made more mobile friendly with the introduction of call conversion which allows direct calls from the website to Treoir from devices such as smartphones as well as tracking and monitoring of conversions from website visits to phone calls. The speed of web pages was improved for website downloading on desktops and mobiles. Treoir continued to avail of Google Grants to the value of \$10,000 per month in Google free advertising. This functionality has considerably improved visibility and demand for Treoir's services online.

There were 54,649 unique visitors to the Treoir website in 2013 and 194,221 pages visited. The Information Pack was the most frequently downloaded publication followed by legal information leaflets in the following order: Passports, Registration of Births, Access and Custody and the Guardianship leaflet together with the S.I. No 5 of 1998 for joint guardianship.

The information area for fathers was the most visited area and was viewed 16,043 times followed by the mothers' section with 12,846 viewers. The majority of Irish viewers were from Dublin followed by Cork, Limerick and Galway

*"Thank you for a truly wonderful website"....client*

*"I find your website very useful for family law and often refer people to it".....service provider*

*"I found your website very clear and concise".....client*

*"I have been dealing with family law on both sides of the water in Wales and Ireland for many years and have spoken to many different solicitors and spent weeks even months and thousands of pounds for their so called expertise, which was extremely poor to say the least. However, Veronica answered all my questions within 3 to 4 minutes and even called me in Wales. I am very impressed with this organisation who promptly replied to my email the day after I sent it. This is an organisation I would recommend to anyone in Ireland"....client*

# POLICY DEVELOPMENT / RESEARCH

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

## Policy

During 2013 Treoir made the following submissions (which are available on the Treoir website [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie))

### **Social Welfare**

Treoir's annual Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social Protection contained the following recommendations:

#### **1. Individualise the social welfare system**

Treoir has long been calling for the simplification of the Social Welfare system. The current system is incredibly complex – between the different categories of payments, the interaction of one payment with another, moving from one payment to another, not to mention secondary benefits.

#### **2. Specifically for unmarried parents**

- that activation for unmarried parents is focused on education first
- that good quality and sustainable part-time work must be created
- the introduction of a joint application for OFP and SWA to allow for payment to be made in a timely manner
- that the Childcare Employment and Training Support Scheme (CETS) should be extended to school-going mothers
- that the CETS scheme and the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme should be extended to include registered child-minders
- That the Subsidised After-School Child Care Scheme be expanded

#### **3. Treoir supports the introduction of a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme**



## One-Parent Family Tax Credit

Following the unexpected announcement in Budget 2014 of the abolition of the One Parent Family Tax Credit (OPFTC) and establishment of the Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit (SPCCTC) Treoir embarked on a sustained campaign to have this decision reversed. This new tax credit effectively denied non-resident fathers access to tax relief for caring for their children. The OPFTC was previously available to non-resident parents. A submission was made to the Minister for Finance and the Tánaiste outlining Treoir's concerns. These concerns included the perceived attack on shared parenting and the financial hardship on families as a result of the reduction in overall income of both parents.

Treoir, as well as other organisations, undertook a lengthy campaign contacting many TDs and senators personally and by phone, writing articles and engaging with fathers. Following this the Minister agreed to amend his initial proposals by allowing primary carers, usually the mother, to transfer the SPCCTC to the non-resident parent (usually the father) on condition that the non-resident carer has the child in his/her care for at least 100 days. Further lobbying ensued as Treoir felt that the 100-day condition was excessive and even unworkable. Despite all our efforts the legislation was enacted in December 2013.

As January progressed and non-resident parents began to see reductions in their pay packet, Treoir was inundated with calls from distraught fathers who did not realise this change had been put in place and were puzzled. Reductions in income varied between €10 and €60 per week.

Treoir will continue to work to have this devastating blow to non-resident fathers reversed. Treoir believes that the State should support shared parenting in the best interests of children. Indeed the Scottish Government states *"that it is best for children to grow up with the involvement of both parents in their lives, as long as this is safe, practical, and in the best interests of the child."* Would that the Irish Government adopt this approach.

## Guardianship

Barnardos, One Family, Marriage Equality, Women's Aid and Treoir came together a number of times with a view to seeking the modernisation of aspects of family law as promised in the Programme for Government. A set of principles which should underpin any family legislation was produced and submitted to relevant government departments.

## Reporting of underage non-abusive sexual activity

Treoir, in collaboration with Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA) undertook research into how other countries deal with the reporting of underage, non-abusive sexual activity. On the basis of this research it was agreed by the Council that Treoir would favour a reduction in the age of consent to sexual activity to 16 years. However, in the absence of such a change, Treoir recommends a system akin to that in the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 which would allow those working with underage young people the autonomy to decide in particular cases whether or not underage non-abusive sexual activity should be reported, subject to professional guidelines and a checklist. It was agreed to send a letter to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs outlining Treoir's position.

## Meeting with the Minister for Social Protection

Treoir, with a number of organisations, attended a meeting with Minister Joan Burton to discuss the activation measures the Department is proposing and their impact on lone parents.

Since its foundation in 1976 Treoir has campaigned for the initiation of a national longitudinal study of children in Ireland in order to ascertain the outcomes for the children of unmarried parents. Some thirty years later the *Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)* study was commissioned by the government.

With financial assistance from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme Treoir commissioned Dr. Owen Corrigan to undertake a study in 2012, using the GUI data on 11,134 infants who were nine months old when the data was collected in 2008/9. The aim of the study was to examine the impact of family composition on outcomes for children.

The results of this baseline study were published in 2013. Entitled *See How They Grow* the study confirmed much of what we know about unmarried solo parents – that generally they have low levels of education, are 10 times more likely than married parents to be welfare dependent, were less likely to be working and fared worst of all on all deprivation measures as compared to other family types.

For the first time in Ireland we have data on Unmarried-cohabitant parents – who generally fared worse than married parents on most measures, but generally did better than solo parents.

The study also contains information on health, welfare, work and childcare and can be downloaded from [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) in the publications section. A *Key Findings* document is also available.

Dr. Corrigan gave a presentation at the annual GUI conference on aspects of the study he undertook for Treoir, focusing particularly on Crisis Pregnancy.

A second study has been commissioned by Treoir, with funding from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, to analyse the data collected when these children were 3 years old. Results will be published in 2014.

# TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

**Treoir will support those working with young parents  
in Ireland**

## Project co-ordination and support

The National Co-ordinator of the Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) continued to support and co-ordinate the 11 TPSP projects throughout the country.

This was achieved through:

- regular contact with projects and meetings with project staff and management when required
- keeping TPSP staff informed of changes in government policy in areas which affect young parents such as education, housing and social welfare
- maintaining contact with key staff in relevant government departments such as Education and Science, the Childcare Directorate in the DCYA, Youth Affairs Section of the DCYA, the Department of Social Protection and the National Education and Welfare Board
- 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, to explore outcomes and to inform advocacy work undertaken by the National Co-ordinator on behalf of young parents.

To ensure that communication flows among all 3 aspects of the TPSP structure, in 2013 the National Co-ordinator organised 2 meetings each of all TPSP staff, TPSP Host Organisations and the TPSP National Advisory Committee. Among the issues raised at these meetings and followed up by the National Co-ordinator were:

- Childcare needs of young mothers in education
- Repeat births among young mothers
- Support for young mothers reared in the care system
- Changes to Supplementary Welfare Allowance, One-parent Family Payment and the Rent Supplement Scheme
- Medical card eligibility

## Feedback to HSE

The TPSP National Co-ordinator provided the HSE with quarterly updates of the number of young parents supported by the TPSP projects and provided a report on the work of the TPSP for the HSE 2013 Review of Adequacy Report. The National Co-ordinator also met the HSE Area Managers in Cavan/Monaghan and Donegal to highlight the unmet needs of teen parents in these areas.

## Website

The TPSP website [www.tpssp.ie](http://www.tpssp.ie) is constantly updated with items of interest to young parents and those involved with them. In 2013 there were over 17,000 views of the TPSP website.

## New developments

In 2013 the National Co-ordinator oversaw the completion of The TPSP Toolkit, a resource for those working with pregnant or parenting teenagers. A workshop on the use of the Toolkit was organised for all TPSP staff. Three other workshops were organised for non-TPSP professionals working with young parents and their families. These workshops were attended by professionals working in counties Clare, Tipperary, Mayo, Longford and Roscommon. A total of 51 non-TPSP staff now have access to the TPSP Toolkit including youth workers, social workers, family support workers, aftercare workers, staff in family resource centres, crisis pregnancy counsellors and those working with marginalised groups such as young Traveller mothers.

# RAISING AWARENESS / PUBLIC RELATIONS

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

## Advertising campaign

Thanks to funding from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Treoir conducted an information campaign in January and February 2013 to provide information for expectant unmarried parents. The campaign highlighted key information on issues including birth registration, cohabitation, shared parenting and establishing paternity. To promote the campaign, Treoir developed 10 Top Tips for unmarried and about-to-be parents (available on the Treoir website) and produced a specially branded “Baby on Board” badge, which pregnant women could use to gain a seat on public transport. Posters advertising the badge were also produced and widely distributed. Dublin Bus displayed the poster free of charge on some of their buses during the summer.

## Media

### Press Releases

A number of press releases were issued during the year (available on [treoir.ie](http://treoir.ie)) including:

*Cohabiting Dads more likely to share parenting duties (June 2013)*

Treoir’s research report *See How they Grow – solo and unmarried-cohabitant parenthood and crisis pregnancy in Ireland* revealed that cohabiting fathers are significantly more likely to share parenting duties and engage with their children than are married fathers.

*Treoir welcomed Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection. (July 2013)*

Treoir particularly welcomed the recommendation that guardianship rights be extended to step-parents and civil partners. Treoir has long been campaigning for this change as currently the only way a step-father can acquire guardianship rights to a child is if he and the mother adopt the child together as a couple. The biological mother thus becomes the adoptive mother of her child, which is inappropriate.

*Slap in the face for parents trying their best (October 2013)*

The removal of the One Parent Family Tax Credit from parents who are sharing the parenting of their children and who are not the child's primary carer is a gross disincentive to shared parenting and Treoir called on the Government to reverse this unjust measure of Budget 2014.

### **Letters to the papers**

Letters from Treoir were published in the Irish Times and Metro Herald during the Baby on Board Campaign and in response to Budget 2014.

### **Media Interviews**

Senior staff of Treoir were interviewed by numerous radio stations including RTE and local stations throughout the country on topics including step-parent adoption, Budget tax credit changes, child abduction, fathers' rights, teen births, Growing up in Ireland research etc.

### **"It says in the papers"**

The daily "It says in the papers" with direct links to items of relevance in the three national daily papers was emailed to all member agencies.

### **e-bulletin**

Treoir online eBulletin was produced and disseminated in April and October 2013 containing all the latest news on matters relating to unmarried parents and those working on their behalf. Both are available at [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

### **Targeted dissemination of Treoir publications**

It is generally found to be a great deal more effective to talk in person to key workers and our experience is that they are delighted with Treoir materials and to know that our service is available. Several agencies were visited in Co. Louth and North Co. Dublin. Treoir staff also visited Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Services, FLAC clinics, the ICA and maternity hospitals in Dublin, Waterford, Wexford and Laois.

### **Website and social media platforms**

Treoir's website [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) continued to be a valuable source of information for our clients, their families and the service providers working on their behalf. This year saw a new page on our website for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) parents and parents-to-be. Treoir now has comprehensive up-to-date information on aspects of LGBT parenting in Ireland today - legal rights, family types and other issues including parental leave, medical care, tax and social welfare matters etc.

Interesting items of relevance were posted regularly on our Facebook and Twitter sites. In December we posted our popular series of *12 tips for Sharing Parenting at Christmas*. Some posts on our Facebook page generated a great deal of discussion among our users, in particular our posts relating to the removal of the One Parent Family Tax Credit for the non-resident parent which was invaluable to Treoir in campaigning for the removal of the Tax Credit. Our number of followers increased significantly during 2013 and we will continue to work at building our audience in order to engage and inform our clients.

*“Well done to Treoir for providing this excellent guidance to those who are attempting to co-parent this festive season, and who may be finding it difficult”....service provider*

### **Case study**

*Jim (not his real name) is unemployed and on social welfare. His ex-partner is taking him to court for maintenance of his one-year-old daughter. He said that at the moment it is hard for him to contribute anything. The mother of his child is working part-time and lives with her parents. Jim wanted to know if the court would make him pay maintenance even though he is on social welfare.*

*Treoir information officer explained to Jim that both parents are responsible for maintaining their daughter until she is 18 or up to age 23 if she is in full time education. His ex-partner is entitled to apply to the court for a maintenance order against him. Following an examination of income and expenditure of both parents, the court may issue an order for Jim to pay a regular amount\*. Even if the court decides that Jim cannot afford to pay maintenance, the mother can request the judge to make an order for a nominal sum (even €5 per week). In this way, if Jim's financial circumstances change for the better in the future, it will be possible for the mother to apply for a variation order to increase this amount.*

*\* The maximum amount that the district court can order from either parent is €150 per week for a child.*

# STRATEGIC ALLIANCES / MEMBERSHIP

**Treoir will develop strategic alliances and seek to engage more fully with members**

## Strategic Alliances

Treoir worked with many agencies during 2013 including funders, service providers, government departments, statutory bodies, policy makers, stakeholder organisations and experts with a commitment to improving the position of unmarried parents.

These included: HSE, HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Citizens Information Board, Departments of Social Protection, Children and Youth Affairs, Justice, Education and Science, Children's Rights Alliance, The Wheel, GLEN, All Families Matter, PILA

## Membership

Treoir has a wide and diverse membership base that includes specialist agencies, HSE, 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 range of supports and services to our members.

### Membership Benefits

#### Members:

- Contribute to the formulation of our policy submissions and campaigns affecting unmarried families
- Have the opportunity to be on the Council of Treoir
- Receive voting rights at the AGM
- Receive our daily 'what it says in the papers' email with direct links to items of relevance in the three national daily papers
- notifications of website and Facebook updates
- Can attend regular members meetings at Treoir to discuss current issues
- Receive complimentary copies of all our publications automatically
- Receive preferential rates at Treoir conferences/workshops/ training sessions
- Use of Treoir boardroom for meetings



## Members' Meetings

Meetings for members are held from time to time in the National Information Centre in Treoir. Usually a speaker gives a short input on a current issue (for example, Civil Partnership Bill, Adoption Bill, social welfare changes etc.) and members have the opportunity of discussing the intricacies of these issues. These meetings are free and take place at lunch-time or tea-time with light refreshments provided.

The meetings give members an opportunity to share their work experience and to discuss issues and service developments.

## Membership Criteria

Membership is open to agencies which provide services to unmarried families and which subscribe to the aims and objectives of Treoir.

## Acknowledgements

### ***Funders***

For the continued financial support in these difficult times we are extremely grateful to the HSE, HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme and the Citizens Information Board.

### ***Government Departments***

To all the great staff at the Departments of Social Protection, Children and Youth Affairs, Justice, Education and Science – thank you for your continued and patient cooperation.

### ***Other NGOs***

Children's Rights Alliance, The Wheel, GLEN, All Families Matter, INOU

### ***Individuals who support the work of Treoir***

Tony McCashin, TCD, Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur for Children, Fergus Ryan, NUI Maynooth, Andrea Kennedy (Intern), Fiona Tyrell (maternity cover), Google, Catherine Bulbulia, barrister, Niall Egan, DSP, Dr. Owen Corrigan, researcher.

# GOVERNANCE

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

## Governance

A strong commitment was made in the Strategic Plan 2012-2016 to ensure good governance and an emphasis was placed on ensuring that as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity Treoir would meet all legal obligations.

We continued to update our policies and procedures and are fully compliant with the Voluntary Code of Governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector. Treoir welcomes the appointment of Úna Ní Dhubhghaill as the Chief Executive Designate of the Charities Regulatory Authority.

Treoir takes very seriously its commitments under the Service Level Agreements with various funders and endeavours to achieve the best possible value for the public funds we receive. No staff member is paid in excess of €60,000 and no bonuses or incentive schemes are in place. While staff salaries were originally in line with HSE grades, no increments have been paid since 2009 and salaries were reduced by a further 10% in 2010. A defined contribution pension scheme for staff is in operation. There is not a defined benefit scheme.

In October 2013 an Audit and Finance Committee was established by the Board and is chaired by Dearbhla Ní Riordáin, Cork University Hospital. Membership of the A & F committee includes Dr. Ruth Barrington, Dr. Thomas Quigley, Christina Hughes and Siobhan Roddy.

During 2013 five council meetings and four executive meetings were held. Attendance at meetings was excellent.

# APPENDIX 1

## CSO STATISTICS

### Births to women outside marriage

Year	Births outside marriage	Births registered to parents at the same address	Births outside marriage as a % of all births
2002	18815		31.1
2003	19313		31.4
2004	19938		32.3
2005	19528		32.0
2006	21295		33.2
2007	23170	11932	32.8
2008	24844	12859	33.1
2009	24532	13647	33.0
2010	24860	13498	33.7
2011	25190	13822	34.0
2012	25344	14321	35.1

### Births to women under 20 by age of mother 2002 – 2012

Year	Births outside marriage	Under 20	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 +
2002	18815	2721	6458	4839	2926	1399	333
2003	19313	2580	6298	5187	3263	1511	362
2004	19938	2340	6389	5423	3521	1711	406
2005	19528	2262	6131	5363	3526	1812	404
2006	21295	2202	6515	6239	3876	1961	489
2007	23170	2251	6764	6960	4348	2302	536
2008	24844	2233	7065	7614	4768	2531	625
2009	24532	2047	6750	7664	4832	2582	645
2010	24860	1844	6217	7942	5375	2746	725
2011	25190	1565	5987	7876	6001	2948	807
2012	25344	1483	5623	7707	6262	3339	926

## Department of Social Protection

Year	OFP recipients	OFP recipients who are unmarried	% of all OFP recipients
2003	79,296	61,132	77.0
2004	80,103	62,339	77.8
2005	80,366	62,354	77.6
2006	83,081	63,814	76.8
2007	85,084	66,774	78.5
2008	87,840	69,404	79.0
2009	90,484		
2010	88,199	64,767	73.4
2011	89,358	64,623	73.8
2012	86,956	62,777	72.2
2013	78,246	58,705	75.0

### EU SILC

#### EU Survey on Income & Living Conditions (SILC) data 2013

##### Risk of Poverty

- Lone parent households continue to be at a high risk of poverty with a rate of 28.4% being recorded for individuals in these households. This is compared to a 16% at risk of poverty rate in the general population.
- Lone parents represent 7.3% of the population.
- 18.8% of children are at risk of poverty; they experience the highest rate of consistent poverty compared to other population groups (those over 65 years and the 18-64 age cohort).

##### Deprivation

- Lone parent households report high levels of deprivation at 56%, an increase of 11.9% since 2009. The deprivation rate for the general population is 24.5%.
- 32.1% of Children were experiencing deprivation in 2011. This figure has increased from 23.5% in 2009.

##### Consistent Poverty

- 16.4% of lone parent households were living in consistent poverty in 2011, this compares to 6.9% of the general population.
- The rate of children living in consistent poverty in 2011 was 9.3%, this is an increase on the figure for 2009 which was 8.7%.

## APPENDIX II

See How They Grow

Summary of findings

### **Growing Up in Ireland Survey 2013**

The Growing Up in Ireland survey, initiated by Treoir, is an on-going national longitudinal study of children in Ireland. Data has been collected on a large cohort of infants (11,134), who were nine months old when the data was collected in 2008/9, and their parents. Treoir commissioned an analysis of the data relating to unmarried parents. Data was collected on lone unmarried parents and unmarried cohabitant parents. Outcomes for these groups were compared to those for married families who were the 'reference category' in the study. Data on crisis pregnancy was also analysed. The full report is available on [www.treoir.ie/policy](http://www.treoir.ie/policy)

#### **Crisis Pregnancy**

- 16.4% of women experienced an 'unintended pregnancy', while just under 16% of women experienced a 'stressful' pregnancy, where this stress was solely due to the pregnancy itself.
- Women whose pregnancies were both unintended and stressful at the same time are labeled as experiencing a 'Pregnancy Crisis'. This group comprised 3.4% of women in the sample.
- Marital status is significantly associated with crisis pregnancy, with unmarried-cohabitant parents 3 times more likely than married parents to experience crisis pregnancy and solo parents 4-5 times more likely.

#### **Solo Parents**

- Solo Parents are two and a half times more likely than married parents to live in a household where anyone was receiving some form of social welfare payment.
- Three out of every ten Solo parents (27.7%) were claiming One-parent family payment.
- Solo parents are 10 times more likely to be welfare dependent, 9 times more likely to be on Rent Supplement and half as likely to as married parents to have been on Jobseeker's Benefit.
- Fared worse on every measure of deprivation

#### **Father's Involvement**

- Fathers in unmarried-cohabiting families were significantly more likely to share parenting duties than were married fathers
- Among solo parents, one quarter had no contact whatsoever with the father of their child.
- Among solo parents, 50% of fathers made no financial contribution to the maintenance of their child.

## APPENDIX III

### Treoir workshops

#### **TREOIR Workshops**

TREOIR offers a variety of workshops and training around the country to groups of unmarried parents and to groups of workers who provide services to unmarried parents. Workshops can be tailored to the individual needs of your particular group to include some of the following:

##### **Legal rights of unmarried parents, including cohabiting parents**

The legal situation of unmarried parents is different to that of married parents. Parents can be confused about guardianship rights of fathers, what it means to put the father's name on the birth certificate, the importance of making a will and many other topics. The aim of the workshop is to provide accurate up to date information on the legal rights and responsibilities of parents who are not married to each other.

The workshop clarifies the legal situation of unmarried parents with regard to guardianship, access, custody, maintenance, birth registration, establishing paternity and passports.

An information session on the changes affecting unmarried cohabiting parents arising from The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, which was enacted in Jan 2011, can be included to cover issues such as:

- How are cohabitants defined in the Act
- What is the Redress Scheme that is available to qualified cohabitants if their relationship ends. This scheme deals with property, maintenance, pension etc.

##### **Shared parenting and explaining relationships**

The aim of this workshop is to raise the awareness of workers of the importance of both parents in the lives of their children.

This workshop also looks at the legal and emotional complexities involved in co-parenting.

##### **Work it out – Social Welfare Payments and Going back to Work/ Education/Training**

The Social Welfare System is very complex. The aim of this workshop is to provide information on social welfare payments and to look at the options / schemes which are available to lone parents when considering employment and/or education / training programmes. The workshop examines how these schemes interact with social welfare entitlements / earnings.

## Treoir publications

**“Being there for them”** - for grandparents of children whose parents are not married to each other. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

**Cohabitants** - new legal rights and obligations for opposite and same sex couples. *Funded by the Family Support Agency.*

**E-Bulletin** - regular information for unmarried parents and those involved with them.

**Family Links Steps and Stages** positive pointers for parents who are helping their children to understand their family situation. *Funded by the Family Support Agency.*

**Information Pack** - for unmarried parents. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

**Reproductive Health Information for Migrant Women** available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Polish, Romanian, and Russian. Available in a manual or CD format. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

**Young Parent Survival Guide** - a great magazine for young mums and dads. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

### Treoir Information Leaflets

Guardianship, Access and custody, Rights of unmarried fathers, Cohabiting parents, Maintenance, Establishing paternity / DNA Testing, Birth registration, Passport applications, International Child Abduction, Shared parenting, Explaining family relationships, Step-parent adoption

### Web based only publications

**Taking the Stand** - a guide for unmarried parents resolving disputes regarding care of their children.

### Legal information for unmarried migrant parents

available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Polish, Romanian and Russian. *Funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.*

All publications can be downloaded from [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie) or order from Treoir LoCall 1890 25 20 84, [info@treoir.ie](mailto:info@treoir.ie)

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The bottom of the page features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, curved, wavy lines in shades of light blue and white, creating a sense of movement and depth against the solid blue background.