

# Annual Report

## 2022



**teen**parents  
support programme

# National Advisory Committee Chairperson

## Foreword

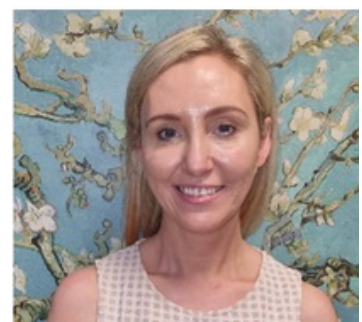
The Teen Parent Support programme (TPSP) were initially established in 2000 under the National Child Care Investment Strategy (1998) to support teen parents and their children as they were identified to be a particularly vulnerable group who would benefit from targeted supports to meet their needs. The aim of the TPSP was to support teen parents in their parenting role and with their other life goals alongside having a child protection role. One of the original aims of the TPSP was also that every pregnant or parenting teenager would be able to access a TPSP in their area. In 2022 there are eleven TPSP's offering a wide range of high quality very accessible services to teen parents.

This report provides a summary of the work of these eleven TPSP's and gives great insight into the wonderful work of the staff of the various projects and the creative ways they have responded to young people during COVID. Vibrant case studies provide a unique insight into the actual impact of the TPSP's on the daily lives of teen parents and their children. While the report highlights the continuing reduction in teen births in Ireland, it also highlights the increasing complexity of needs of the young people the projects are supporting. Some of these issues are the current housing crisis and increasing risk of homelessness, domestic violence in relationships, food and period poverty, mental health and challenges for migrant teen parents.

This Annual Report was compiled by, Samantha Dunne, National Manager of the TPSP. The national manager role involves maintaining meaningful contact with all projects, providing support to staff, networking, advocating and raising issues at a national level to highlight strengths and areas for development amongst the projects. This role also involves having a direct role in policy and service development at national level and this has been highlighted through her active role on the National Advisory Committee. 2022 has been an exciting year for the TPSP as plans to expand the service to all counties are now actively underway. This development highlights the effective role of the National Manager, the TPSP projects and the National Advisory Committee in their constant advocacy for need for this service to be accessible throughout the country.

The wonderful service provided to teen parents and their children through the TPSP is demonstrated throughout this report.

Laura Harrington,  
Chairperson  
National Advisory Committee  
Teen Parents Support programme



Treoir, established in 1976, is a national organisation comprising a federation of services geared towards providing support to unmarried parents and their children. Initially, the organisation aimed to offer necessary assistance and information to unmarried mothers and the professionals who served them. This was a time when unmarried women encountered high levels of discrimination and social stigma. Their children were deemed "illegitimate" as they were not born to a married couple.

In the almost five decades since its founding, Treoir has witnessed significant changes in Irish society. For instance, birth rates outside of marriage have increased from 3.8% in 1976 to 41% in 2021. Family formation has undergone significant changes, and legislation has adapted to reflect this evolution, such as the Children and Family Relationships Act 2016, Children First Act, and Marriage Equality. However, more work is necessary to ensure equity for all family types, not just those based on marriage. Despite these changes, the financial circumstances and treatment of lone parents remain a concern. Lone mothers that are economically and educationally disadvantaged, especially those who

leave school during secondary education, face higher poverty rates. Treoir, through advocating for policy changes and eliminating barriers, aims to tackle these obstacles. Our organisation has consistently championed for this group of mothers, as evidenced by our management of the Teen Parents Support programme. This initiative acknowledges the need for support for young mothers who are at a high risk of discontinuing their education due to pregnancy, and the subsequent impact on their career prospects. It also acknowledges the importance of supporting young fathers to take on a more significant role in their child's life.

In addition, Treoir is responsible for hosting the National Kinship Care programme, which entails full-time parenting of children by relatives or close acquaintances, such as grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles or family friends. This type of care may arise due to various factors, including parental substance abuse disorder, death of a parent, abandonment, illness, or imprisonment. Kinship care is defined as family-based care within the child's extended family or with close friends of the family, whether formal or informal.

**VISION** Treoir's vision is of an Ireland where unmarried parents and their children enjoy full equality under the law, and where their legal, civil and economic rights are vindicated both in practice and in legislation.

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

# CONTENTS

- 01** Overview of the Teen Parents Support programme
- 02** National Advisory Committee
- 03** Supports and Interventions
- 04** Teen births 2011 - 2022
- 05** Expansion of the Teen Parents Support programme
- 06** Management of the TPSP
- 07** Referrals in 2022
- 08** Supports and programmes Provided in 2022
- 09** Policy Development /Submissions
- 10** Case Studies
- 11** TPSP Project Contact List

# 01

## Overview of the Teen Parents Support programme

### **THE TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME IS A DEDICATED TARGETED SERVICE PROVISION RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN**

The Teen Parents Support programme (TPSP), established in 1999, provides preventative support services for families headed by young parents in Ireland. The programme consists of 11 projects across 10 counties, funded by Tusla and the Health Services Executive (HSE), and coordinated by Treoir. It targets parents aged 19 or under, and supports them until their children turn 2, with planned expansion to include young parents aged 20-24 where resources are available.

The Teen Parent Support programme (TPSP) provides support to teen parents who are referred by various sources including family members, health and social services, and educational institutions. The support is offered through one-to-one sessions, group activities, and referral to other services. It covers all aspects of the young parent's life, including health, relationships, education, child development, and legal issues. The programme also extends support to grandparents and other family members involved with the young parents.

### **THE TPSP IS PRIMARILY TASKED WITH HELPING YOUNG PARENTS NAVIGATE THE DIFFICULT PERIOD FROM PREGNANCY TO PARENTHOOD**

TPSP staff aim to build meaningful relationships with young parents, enhance their self-esteem, and build on their existing skills, experience, and knowledge. They also encourage young parents to meet their own needs and maintain their social and support networks.



# Locations of TPSP Projects

**Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary** - Carlow County, Kilkenny City and County, and parts of Tipperary - St. Catherine's Community Services Center, Carlow

**Cork** - Cork City and County - Childhood Matters, Cork

**Donegal** - Letterkenny, Finn Valley, and Inishowen - Foroige, Letterkenny & Ballybofey

**Galway** - Galway City and County - HSE University Hospital - Nurse's Home, Galway

**Limerick** - Limerick City and County - Limerick Social Services, Limerick

**Louth** - Louth County - Lifestart, Drogheda and Cox's House, Dundalk

**Wexford** - Wexford - County - Barnardos, Enniscorthy

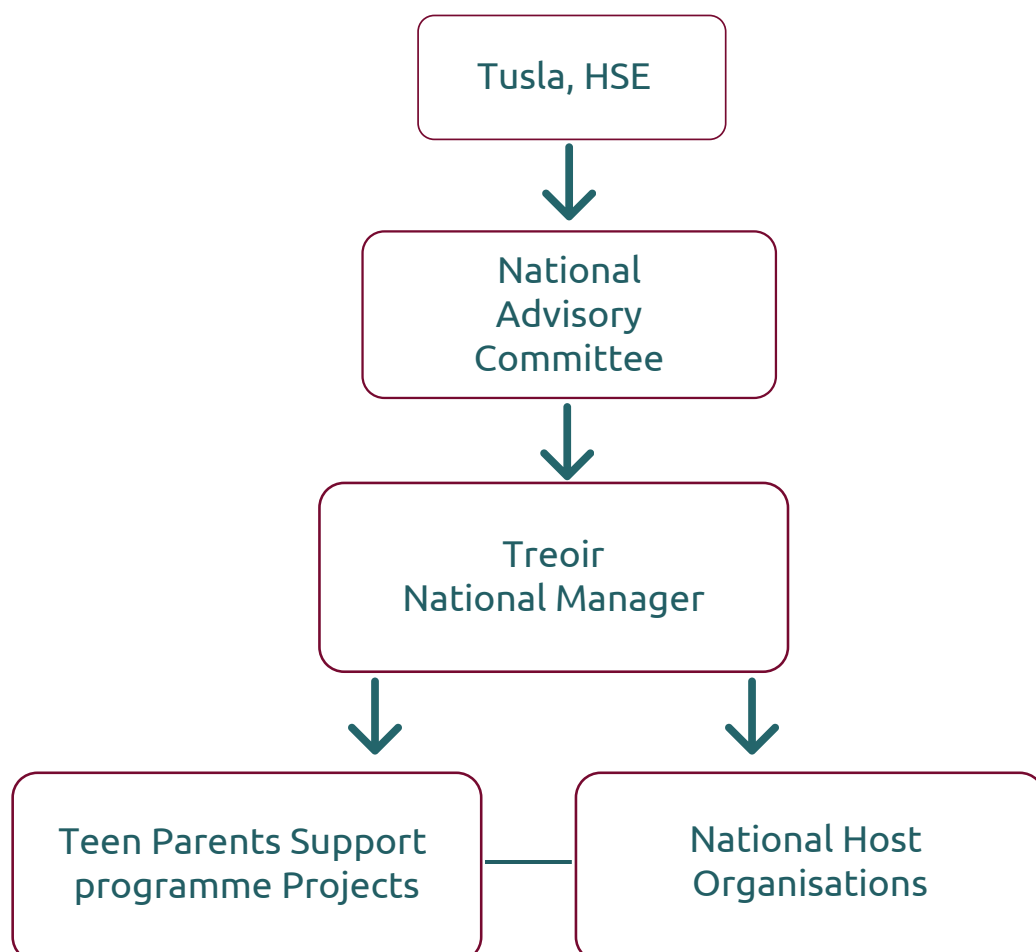
## **Dublin**

- Ballyfermot/Bluebell/Inchicore - Familibase, Ballyfermot
- Dublin 24, 12, and parts of 6 - Barnardos, Clondalkin
- Dublin 5, 13, 17 and parts of 3 and 9 - Doras Buí, Coolock
- Finglas, Barnardos, Finglas



# National Structure of the TPSP

The TPSP structure comprises a National Manager, a National Advisory Committee (NAC), and National Host Organisations that engage in information sharing and collaboration. The structure is managed by Treoir's National TPSP Manager. At the local level, the structure includes an employing organization from the statutory or voluntary sector, TPSP project leaders, and project workers.



The Teen Parents Support programme National Advisory Committee oversees the development of the national TPSP since 1999. Its current chairperson is Laura Harrington, appointed by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in 2021. The committee supports the national TPSP manager and advises on various areas of its development, with a focus on expanding the project nationally. The National Advisory Committee (NAC) supports young parents and their children through interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration with statutory and non-statutory agencies. Representatives from different government departments are appointed to provide quick advice on policy issues raised, with the TPSP National manager servicing the committee's work and liaising with the chairperson. In 2022, the NAC met once as a group, and the National Manager had several meetings with the Chairperson.

### Chairperson

Laura Harrington, Head Medical Social Worker, National Maternity Hospital

### Members

Dearbháil Nic Giolla Mhicíl - Dept. Social Protection - Principal Officer

Stephen Jaffray - Dept. Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth - Parenting Support Policy Unit

TPSP Managers - Susan McLoughlin - Donegal TPSP Project Leader  
Catherine Joyce - Representing all three Barnardos Projects

Damien Peelo - Treoir CEO

Samantha Dunne - Treoir – TPSP National Manager

TPSP Staff - Joanne Ryan - Limerick TPSP Coordinator; Louise Kelleher, Project Worker, Cork

Nuala Colton - Tusla Education Support Services

Sinead Healy - Dept. of Housing – Assistant Principal Officer - Homelessness Policy

Youth Participants: Emily Salmon & Katie Davis



# 03

## Supports and Interventions

TPSP offers interventions and supports for pregnant and parenting teens and their children. Working with young parents during pregnancy/parenthood, TPSP staff build their capacity as parents and adolescents towards early adulthood. Supports include:



- One-to-one emotional and practical support for young mothers, young fathers and other family members
- Referral to home visiting schemes such as Community Mothers, Community Parents, Home Start or First Steps programmes
- Encouragement to retain their own social structures and attend peer support groups organised by the TPSP or other agencies
- Individual antenatal support including preparation for birth
- Antenatal Support Groups (provided on site by some TPSPs) General information/support with health-related issues including contraception
- Referral to appropriate health services such as GPs, PHNs (Public Health Nurse), psychiatric, paediatric and child development services
- Individual support with parenting
- Parenting courses
- Assistance with education related expenses
- Information/support/advocacy in relation to social welfare entitlements, housing, education and training
- Support with personal relationships
- Information and support regarding legal rights such as access, custody and guardianship
- Information/support in relation to domestic violence and referral to other sources of support
- Referral to and liaison with social work teams and community care teams in relation to child welfare and protection
- Information/referral and advocacy in relation to schools, colleges, employment programmes, Youthreach and other training bodies.

## Teen births 2011 - 2022

Year	Number of births*	Fertility rates**
2011	1720	12.5
2012	1639	12.2
2013	1381	10.4
2014	1253	9.3
2015	1187	8.7
2016	1098	7.8
2017	1041	6.9
2018	980	6.3
2019	864	5.5
2020	841	5.3
2021	699	4.3
2022	798	4.9

**TABLE 1 BIRTH AND FERTILITY RATES TO MOTHERS  
UNDER NINETEEN YEARS, 2011 - 2022**

Table 1 indicates a consistent decrease in births to teen parents and national fertility rates over the past decade, with a slight increase in 2022. However, the level of need has still risen over time due to increased vulnerabilities and complexities experienced by young parents.

*Sources: CSO Vital Statistics and Yearly Summaries 2011 to 2022*

\*Number of births that were registered in 2022

\*\*Fertility rate is the number of live births per 1000 women aged between 15 and 20 years

# 05

## Expansion of the Teen Parents Support programme

Treoir's Strategic Plan 2019-23 prioritises the expansion of the TPSP to ensure all young parents have access to it nationally. The TPSP NAC and National TPSP manager have worked towards expansion in recent years. The TPSP will now be further developed and expanded with funding from the European Social Fund Plus programme, co-funded by the exchequer and the European Union., following growing recognition of the increased need for this level of dedicated support for young parents. The overall objective and goal is that every young parent in the Republic of Ireland will have access to a TPSP locally.

The expansion of the TPSP, now known as the "Young Parents Support programme," to cover young parents up to twenty-four years old, and expand geographically across several counties, is being led by the National TPSP Manager, DCEDIY's Parenting unit, and Tusla's Partnership, Prevention, and Family Support unit, in collaboration with local and regional PPFS managers and existing TPSP projects. This expansion has been well-received by Treoir, DCEDIY, Tusla, and all existing TPSP projects, who will collaborate to make the YPSP accessible to all young parents locally.

**THE TPSP WILL EXPAND GEOGRAPHICALLY AND IN AGE-RANGE IN RECOGNITION OF THE NEED FOR INCREASED RESOURCES**



## Management of the TPSP

*This section sets out a summary of work of the National Manager, hosted by Treoir and funded by the HSE under the Social Inclusion Unit CH09*

In 2022, Treoir continued to support all eleven TPSP projects and professionals involved with young parents. This was achieved through:

- regular face-to-face contact with the TPSP National Advisory Committee, all TPSP employing organisations, and TPSP project staff to ensure cohesion and communication and engage in recruitment and induction,
- provided training to TPSP staff on the National Childcare Scheme, and 12 staff completed “Circle of Security” training funded by Tusla Parenting Unit.
- gathering and analysis of data relating to young parents,
- advocating for and representing young parents with Tusla, the Department of Children, and the Children's Rights Alliance,
- prepared submissions to the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government on issues of key concern to young people,
- raising concerns about the housing crisis and the impact of homelessness on young children through our membership of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness.

### School Completion programme (SCP)

The SCP is funded through Tusla’s Education Support Services (TESS). The SCP aims to increase the number of young parents who complete the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent. In 2022/2023, Treoir received just over €252,000 in SCP funding which was divided among the 11 TPSP projects. The National Manager, together with Treoir’s Administrative and Finance Officer, administered this fund and reported to TESS.

### Responding to queries

The TPSP National Manager acts as a source of information, advice, guidance, and referral to other supports for pregnant and parenting teens, their families, and professionals in non-TPSP areas. During 2022, the manager also promoted the TPSP across Tusla local area networks, Family Resource Centres, relevant government departments and community based service providers working with families and young people.

# 07 Referrals in 2022



**8,995 YOUNG PARENTS  
SUPPORTED SINCE 1999**

TPSP Provides Support to Young Parents Nationwide in 2022.

In the year 2022, TPSP offered assistance to 643 young parents, including 592 mothers, 50 fathers, and 1 maternal grandmother. Of these, 214 young parents were first-time contacts, accounting for 27% of all births to young parents in 2022.

Throughout the year, 194 cases involved follow-ups, 34 were re-opened cases, and 203 were successfully closed. Since its inception in 1999, the TPSP has provided support to 8,995 young parents in total.

Most of the young parents who received support (77%) were from urban backgrounds, with the remaining 23% hailing from rural areas. It's worth noting that in most cases, the young mother was the primary focus of the programme's efforts.

In 643 cases, TPSP workers reported that 135 parents were cohabiting at the time of referral. In addition, 195 mothers stated that their child's father was their primary support. TPSP workers also provided support to 50 fathers and offered secondary support to other family members as needed.

Maintaining healthy relationships between young parents and family members has been a significant aspect of TPSP work. This additional support provides young parents and their children with a more secure living environment, as 65% of young parents reside in their family home or that of their partner.



# Age Profile of Referrals in 2022

## Statistics Show Increase in Younger Parents Seeking Assistance from TPSP

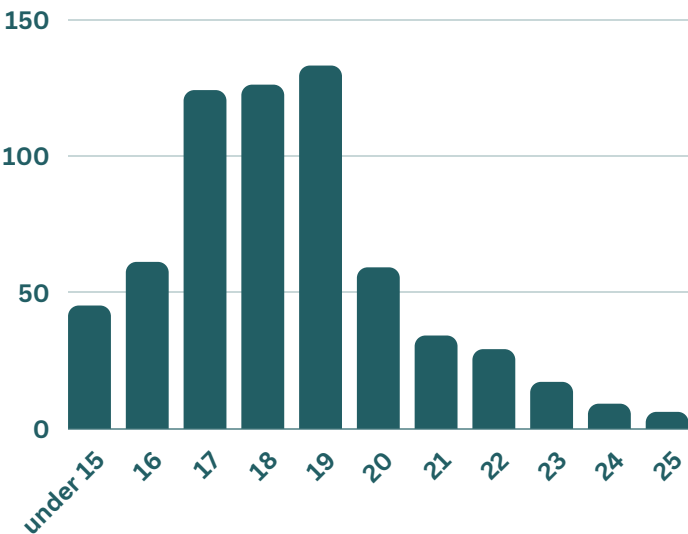
In 2022, 45 referred young parents were 15 years old or under, while 61 were 16. The majority of referrals, 383 in total, were young parents aged between 17 and 19. Additionally, 154 were between the ages of 20 and 25, accounting for 21% of new referrals that year. Over time, the TPSP has seen a consistent increase in young parents aged 20 and over seeking assistance. As a result, the Department of Children has extended the age range to 24 to address the growing needs of this population.

### Distribution of Mothers' Age Profile

Among the 45 parents who were 15 or younger at the time of referral, 42 were identified as mothers. 57 parents were 16 years old, 351 were aged between 17 and 19, and 142 fell in the 20-25 age range. In past years, more referrals were made for younger parents to the TPSP. However, in recent times, young parents tend to fall in the higher age brackets of teenage years and early twenties.

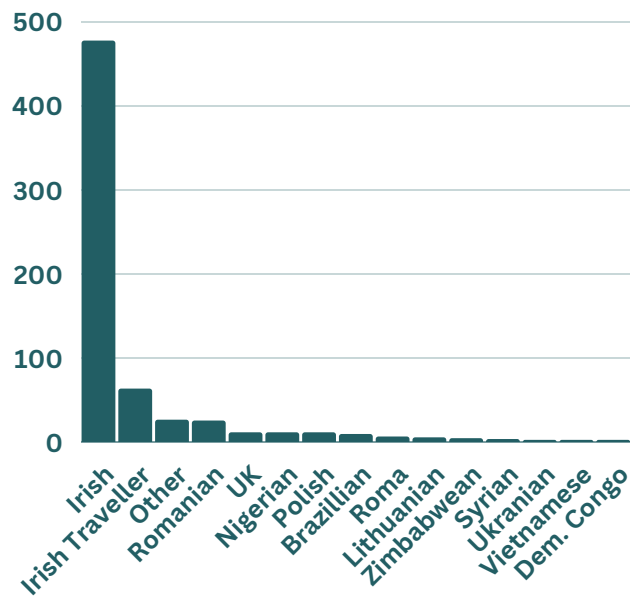
## Nationality/Cultural Identity of Referrals

The TPSP assisted parents from 15 different nationalities in 2022. Out of 631 parents who provided their nationality, 477 were Irish, 63 were Irish Travellers, and the other 91 identified as both EU and non-EU citizens.



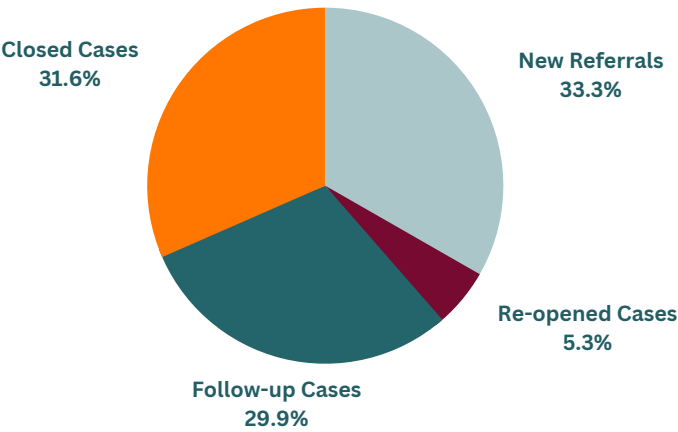
### Father's Age Profile

In 2022, 50 fathers received support from their TPSP. Of these, 3 were 15 or younger, 4 were 16, 31 were between 17 and 19, and 12 were between 20 and 24 years of age. When referred to their TPSP, fathers are typically in their late teens to early twenties.



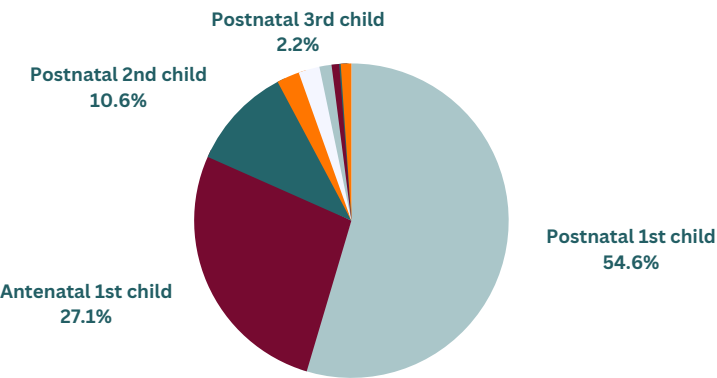
# Status of Cases in 2022

In 2022, there were 214 new referrals, these were young parents who presented to their TPSP for the first time. In some cases, young parents may disengage with their TPSP for a number of reasons, however, in 2022, 34 young parents had their cases re-opened and receive renewed support from their TPSP support workers.



After a referral, support workers maintain contact with young parents until they choose to permanently leave their service or until their child is no longer eligible for assistance, referred to as "follow-ups." In 2022, there were 192 follow-up cases. Additionally, 214 cases were closed last year for various reasons, such as the child aging out, parent disengagement, or the parents having their needs met and/or transitioning to another service.

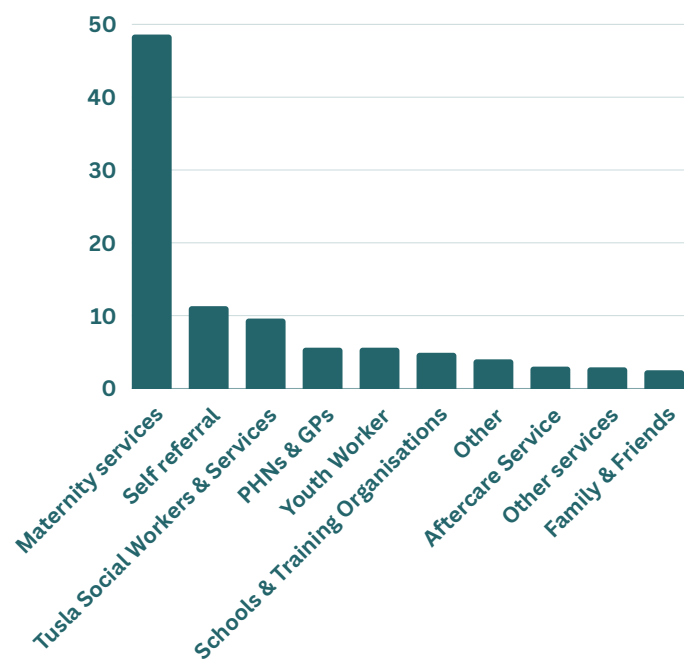
# Pregnancy Status of Cases



In 2022, most young parents (351 cases) were directed to their local TPSP during their initial pregnancy. An additional 174 cases were referred after the birth of their first child. During their second pregnancy, 68 young parents received assistance, while 15 were referred following the birth of their second child. Fewer parents received support during or after their third or fourth child.



# Mothers' Referral Source, 2022



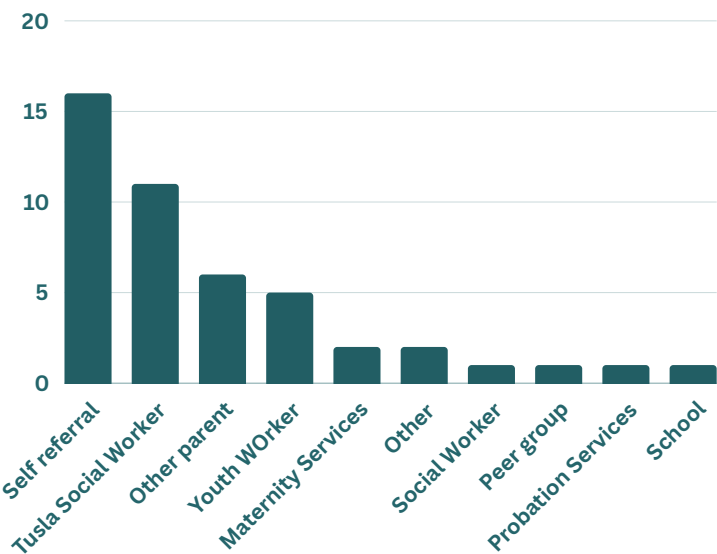
## Referral Pathways to TPSP for Young Parents

Young parents often find their local TPSP through a variety of channels – via self-referral, family/friends, or agencies. Typically, mothers are referred through maternity services while fathers tend to refer themselves. In 2022, maternal referrals made up 49% of all referrals to the TPSP, with self-referrals and Tusla social workers/local Tusla services being the second-largest referral source.

# Fathers' Referral Source, 2022

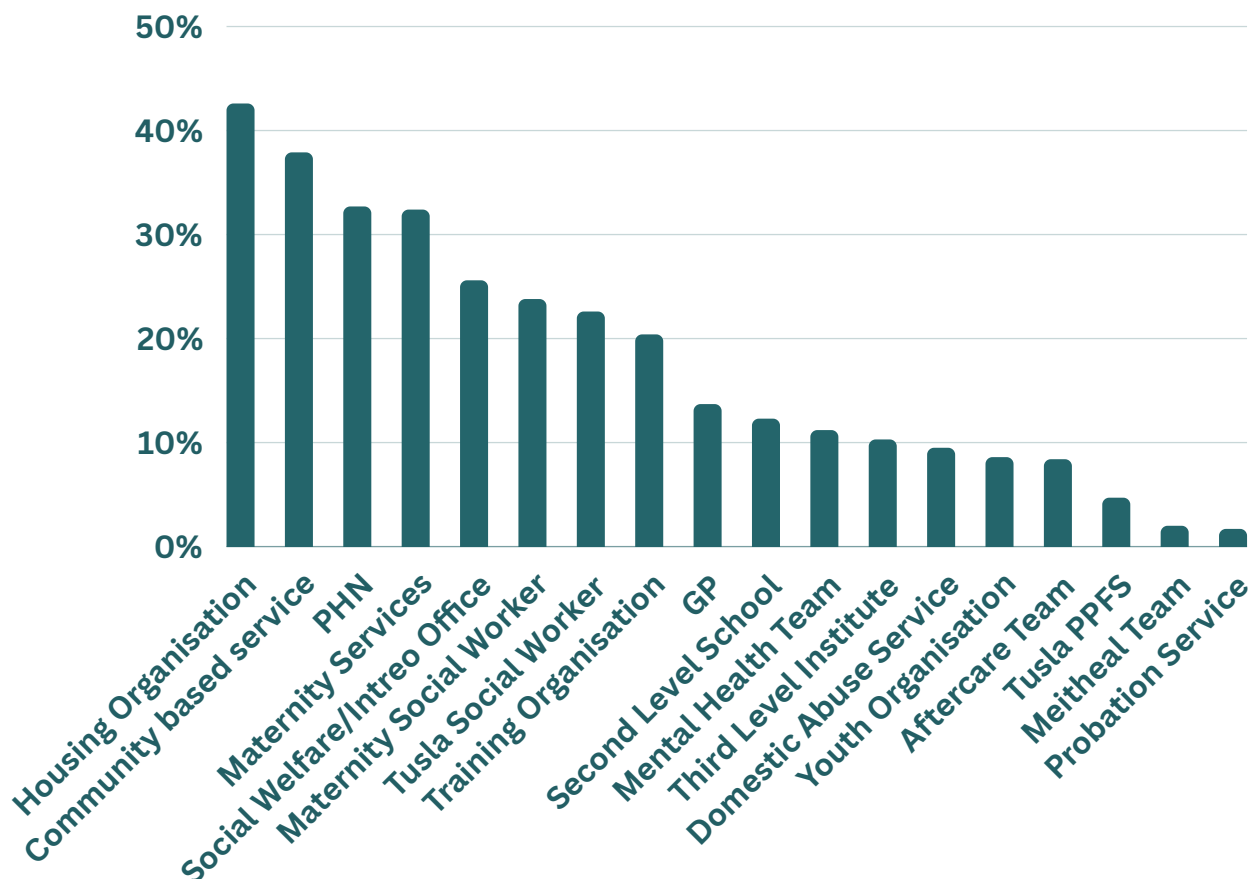
## How Fathers Access TPSP Services in 2022

As of 2022, fathers generally seek out TPSP services through referral by Tusla social workers or Tusla services, but self-referrals are becoming more common and indicate the growing awareness of TPSP within local services. The third most common referral pathway for fathers was through the child's mother, which is not uncommon in situations where both parents share parenting responsibilities or live together with their child.





# Interagency collaboration



Collaboration with local services and agencies is vital in supporting young parents and their families. Project workers often engage with other services on behalf of their clients, with the highest level of engagement being with housing organizations at 42.6%.

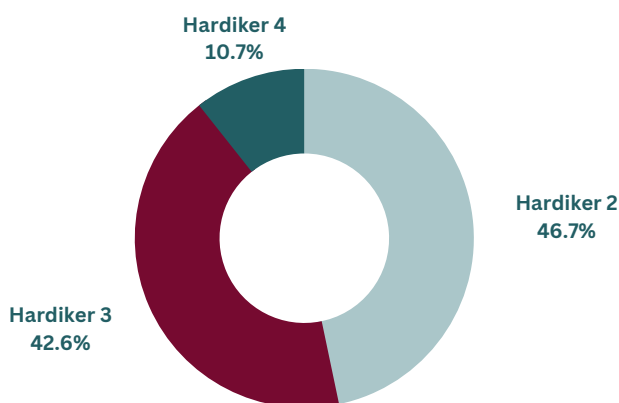
A significant percentage of project workers support young parents with antenatal education, while also appointment arrangements, and accompanying them to maternity services. In 2022, a high percentage of project workers engaged with maternity services, public health nurses, and maternity social workers to aid young parents facing housing issues.

\*Maternity Social Workers are not available in all maternity services

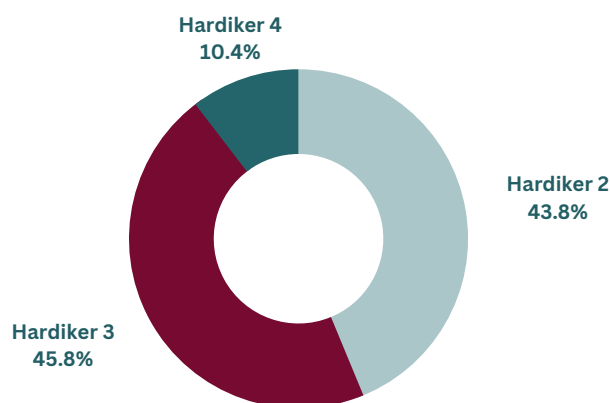
# Level of Need

During the referral stage, project workers evaluate the extent of support required by young parents to identify the necessary interventions and gain a deeper understanding of each case. As depicted in charts 1 and 2, the level of need presented by both mothers and fathers in 2022 was comparable, with most parents classified as Hardiker level 3. This category indicates the requirement for therapeutic support and services for children and families undergoing severe difficulties. It's our expectation that the level of need will decrease after project workers offer suitable intervention to parents.

Level of need, Mother



Level of need, Father



**Hardiker 1** - Universal preventative and social development service needs.

**Hardiker 2** - Support and therapeutic intervention for children and families in need.

**Hardiker 3** - Therapeutic Supports and service for children and families in severe difficulty.

**Hardiker 4** - Intensive and long-term support and protection for children and families.

### Positive Outcomes for Young Parents in 2022 TPSP

In 2022, more than half of the closed cases showed a decreased level of need compared to their initial referral to the TPSP. This is due to the support provided by project workers, who establish a strong relationship with young parents to ensure their participation and identify the necessary services and support they require.

Chart 3 highlights that the most significant change in level of need, over 46%, was from level 3 to level 2, indicating that parents are no longer in difficult situations but may still need additional services and support as they transition out of the TPSP. If necessary, parents are referred to other agencies or services that can help them.

To further assist young parents, the TPSP maintains close relationships with other organisations to guarantee a timely response to their needs. Collaboration between TPSP and other agencies has been critical in supporting young parents.

### Young Parent Housing/Homelessness in 2022

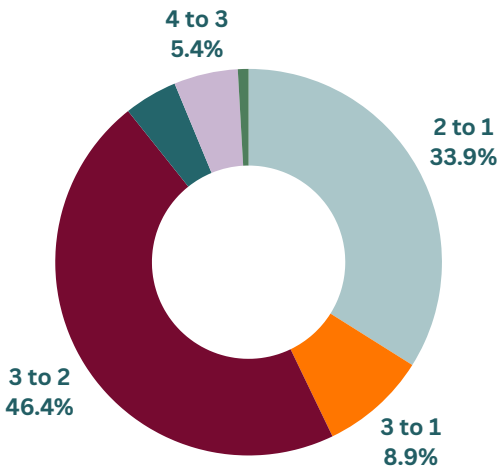
In 2022, a majority of parents, 56%, resided in their family residence, but these living situations can often be due to the young age of the parent since under 18s cannot apply for any form of social housing assistance. Most young parents who live at home with their own parents are in secure accommodation, but many are living in difficult situations if their relationship with their parents has become strained following pregnancy. A smaller percentage of parents, 7.9%, secured private rented housing through the Housing Assistance Payment scheme offered by local authorities. Notably, 75% of these parents fall between the ages of 18-23, as local authorities do not accept housing assistance applications from those under 18.

Additionally, 20 parents were living in private rented accommodation without any assistance, with only one parent receiving rent supplement.

While 8.5% were homeless, 14% were in unsuitable accommodation, either in the home of their partner’s parents’, or with another family member.

In most cases, TPSP project workers act as advocates for young parents with landlords and local authorities to assist in securing suitable accommodations. This advocacy might involve supporting young parents in applying for social housing or accompanying them to private rented house viewings.

### Lowered level of need



# Social care History

In 2022, out of 464 young parents who provided information regarding their social care history, 55.6% reported no current or previous history of care, or key work. 35.6% of parents had a previous history of social work, and 8.9% were currently engaged with a social worker or a child and family support worker.

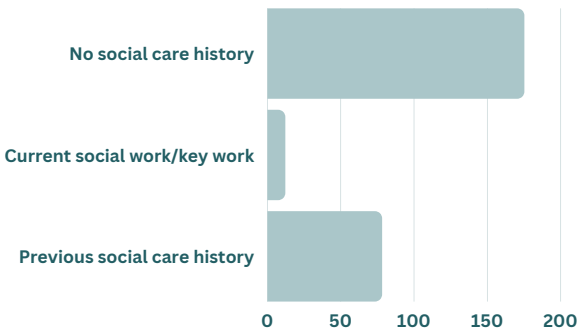
In 2022, data collected from 265 parents revealed information about their partner's prior or current social care involvement. Of those surveyed, 66% reported no prior engagement with social work or key work, while 29.4% had a history of social care involvement. 4.5% were currently involved with child and family support or social work.

Regarding parents who provided information about their child's social care history, specifically in the postnatal stage, 70.8% of children had no previous or current social care history. 16.1% were currently working with family support workers or social work, while 13.1% had a previous social care history.

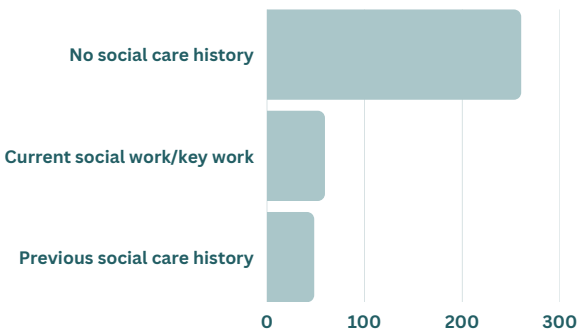
Social Care History of Primary Client



Social Care History of Other parent



Social Care History of Child



# Education and Training

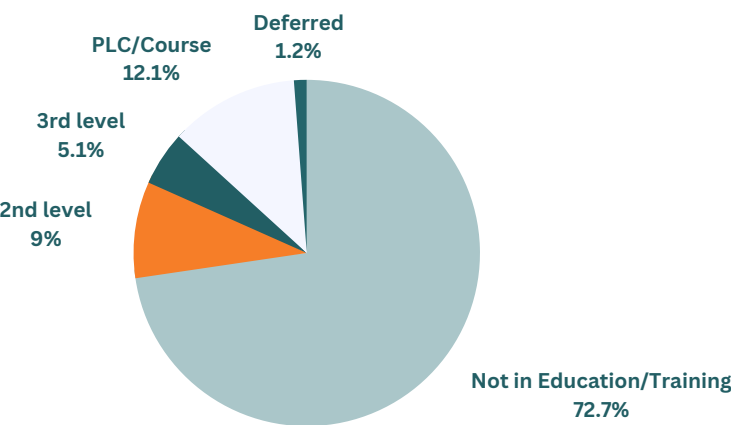
In 2022, 589 young parents provided information regarding their education and training status. Results showed that 72.7% of respondents were no longer in education, with 26.2% currently pursuing education or training, while 1.2% had formerly deferred their education. Among parents who were antenatal at the time of referral, 11.2% reported leaving education due to pregnancy.

When considering the highest level of education obtained, 40.2% of parents disclosed completing their formal education.

There were 56 early school leavers, and 25.8% of parents completed their junior certificate. Additionally, 7.7% of parents completed 3rd level or a PLC course, 10.6% left school before completing their leaving certificate, and 3.1% left before completing their 3rd level course.

It's worth noting that 40% of those who left education expressed plans to return in the future.

Further analysis revealed that 35% of those not in education had a social care history. Among early school leavers, 40% had a social care history, compared to an overall average of 44%.

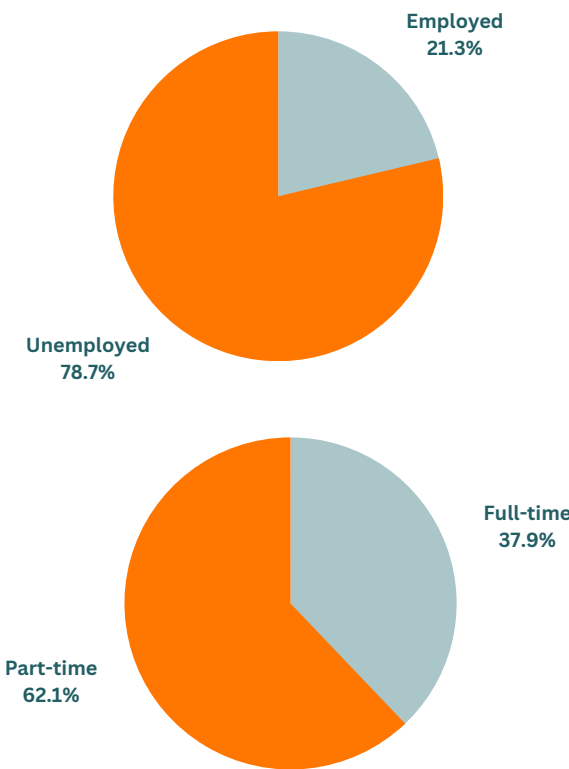


# Employment

In 2022, a total of 580 parents submitted their employment status data. Of these parents, 21.3% were employed at the time of referral. It's worth noting that the majority of these employed parents had access to childcare, primarily through private childminders. Additionally, these employed parents were typically in the higher age-range.

Of the parents who provided information regarding employment, the majority (62.1%) worked part-time and also received social protection payments, with the one-parent family payment being the most common form of support (77%). This highlights an importance on in-work supports to young parents. Furthermore, fathers had a higher employment rate, accounting for 40% of the employed parents compared to only 19% of mothers.

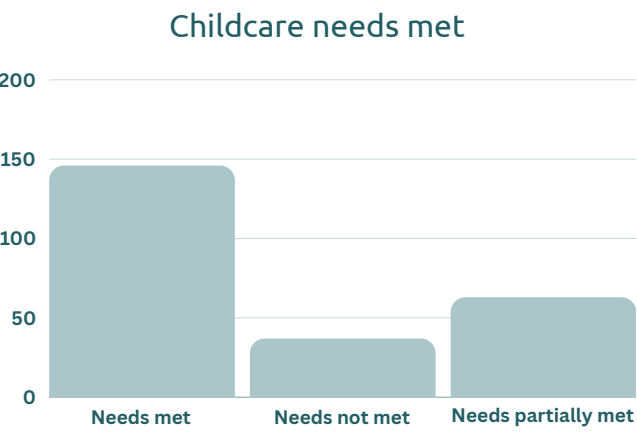
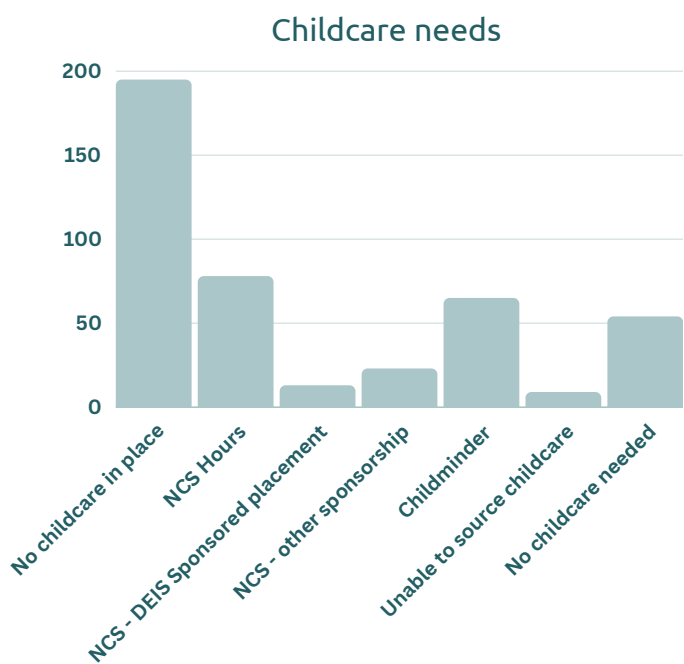
It's interesting to note that all mothers who worked part-time were also in receipt of social protection payments.



# Childcare

According to data in 2022, 44.6% of 437 young parents who provided information regarding their childcare needs lacked childcare arrangements but did require childcare. Among those who had secured childcare, 14.9% used private childminders, and 80% of those childminders were grandparents of the child. Merely 23.1% of respondents had accessed childcare via the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), with a mere 5.3% having utilised the sponsored element of NCS.

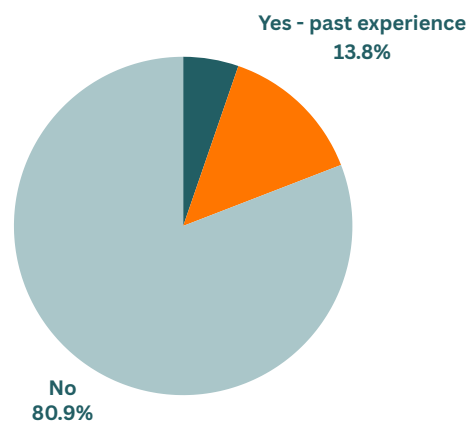
Out of those who reported childcare needs, 25.6% felt that their requirements were only partially met, 15% felt that their needs were not met, while just 59.6% had their childcare needs satisfied.



# Domestic Abuse

Recent years have witnessed an increase in domestic violence cases involving young parents. Alarming statistics show that in 2022, 19.1% of young parents reported current or past experiences with domestic violence to their support workers. TPSP project workers offer valuable information on domestic violence services and supports, including emotional support during these challenging times.

Of the total number of young parents, 9 are under the protection of Protection Orders, 14 have Safety Orders, and 5 have Barring Orders against their current or former partners. Three parents are currently subject to Protection Orders, while two parents are subject to Safety Orders.



## IN 2022, TPSP PROJECT WORKERS RECORDED DISCLOSURES BY PARENTS OF COERCIVE CONTROL

In 2022, TPSP support workers were asked to gather data on coercive control. According to the data from referrals, 14.5% of young parents reported experiencing coercive control from a current or former partner. Of the respondents, 36 young parents reported experiencing it currently, while 57 disclosed having such experiences in the past, from a former partner.

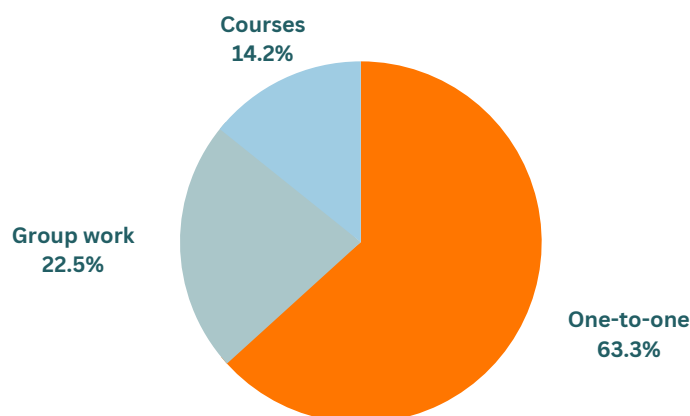
# 08 Supports and programmes Provided in 2022

In 2022, TPSP support workers offered a comprehensive range of services to cater to the specific requirements of young parents, many of whom have multifaceted needs. TPSP Project Workers are adept at addressing these needs by delivering personalised support services through an integrated, evidence-based, and trauma-informed approach. Common issues faced by young parents include but are not limited to: affordable housing, hidden homelessness, poverty, limited access to education, training and employment opportunities, affordable and flexible childcare, exposure to domestic abuse, and mental health concerns.

Navigating through these challenges can be especially arduous given the developmental stage of young parents. Project workers provide guidance and support by furnishing relevant information, advocacy, and practical assistance. Peer group sessions, one-to-one support, and home visits are some of the ways in which project workers engage young parents. The ultimate goal of this programme is to assist parents in their parenting journey and improve their overall outcomes, as well as those of their young children.

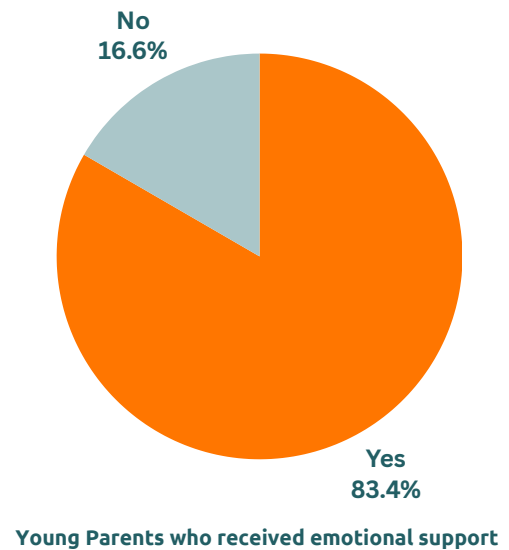
## Parenting Support

In 2022, young parents were provided with a range of support mechanisms to assist them in their parental roles. A significant portion of parents (84.4%) received individualized support, while 30% participated in group peer work and 19% attended parenting courses. Moreover, 70% of parents received in-home assistance through initiatives such as home visiting, with 69% of parents receiving visits from their designated project worker. The project offers group and one-to-one work for young parents, including evidence-based parenting programmes and courses like Mellow Bumps, the Good Enough Parent, and Partnership with Parents. They also provide guidance and personal counseling to support parents' personal development, educational attainment, and employment prospects while building their confidence.



# Emotional Support with Building Relationships

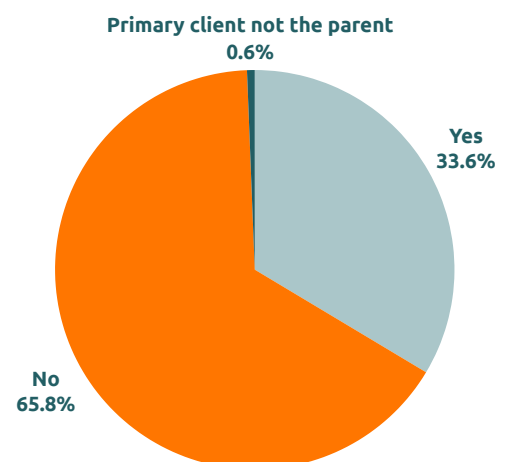
In 2022, project workers offered emotional support to 83.4% of parents dealing with challenging relationships with partners and family members. This included support for mothers (45%) and fathers (10%) in communicating with each other, managing challenging relationships with maternal (46%) and paternal (26%) family, and maintaining a support system. As most young parents live with family, rebuilding these relationships is important for their mental health, well-being, and home security.



**PROJECT WORKERS AIM TO SUPPORT BOTH PARENTS AND HELP TO BUILD HEALTHY PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS WHERE POSSIBLE**

## Building parenting relationships - Fathers

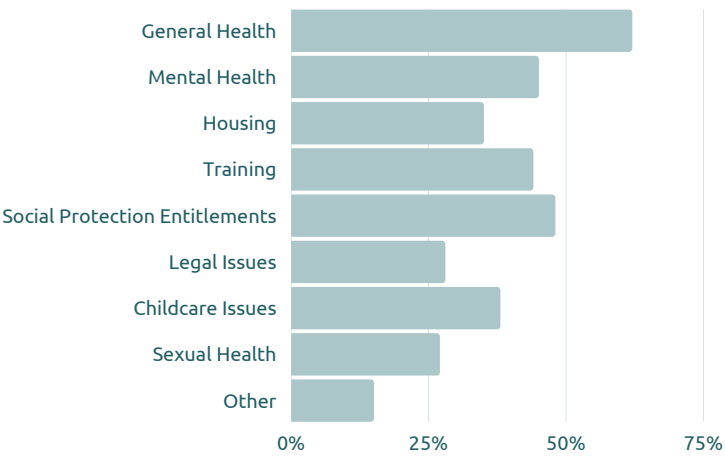
Project workers reach out to non-primary parents to offer support and build healthy relationships, particularly with young fathers. In 2022, workers contacted 216 non-primary parents, mostly young fathers, to help them improve parenting skills and bond with their child and often improving their relationship with their child's mother and extended family. 45% of mothers considered the father of their child as their primary source of emotional support. In closed cases, there was a 21% increase in fathers' contact with their child with support from TPSP.





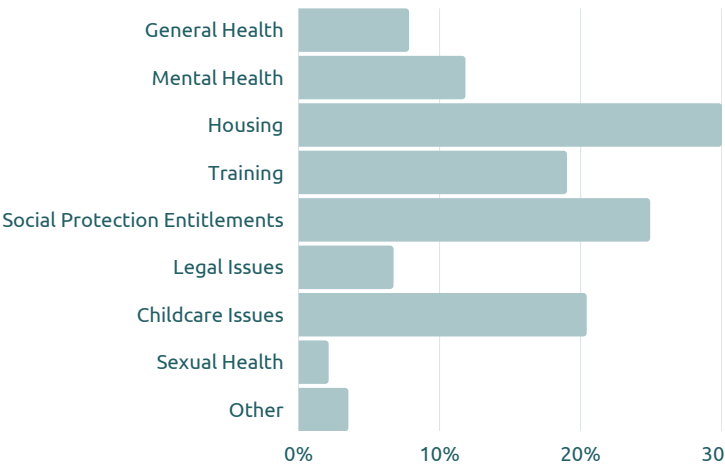
# Information Provision

TPSP support workers provide young parents with information on various aspects of their lives, such as housing, education, social protection, family law, mental and general health, childcare, and financial support. They also assist with support applications and advocacy. Statistics indicate that a significant percentage of parents received information on general health, mental health, social protection entitlements, training, and housing supports. Notably, 35% of those living in their family home received information on housing supports.



# Advocacy

TPSP support advocates for parents by contacting other agencies and services to help them access supports, especially in securing housing and childcare placements. The current housing crisis presents challenges for parents, but project workers assist in navigating the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) to obtain needed childcare.



# 09

## Policy Development/Submissions

The Teen Parent Support programme (TPSP) came into existence in 1999 to address the rise in births among young parents. The need for such a programme arose due to growing concerns that this demographic was highly vulnerable, necessitating a response through advocacy and policy development efforts over several years.

To this day, TPSP remains an essential support system for young parents, advocating for them by highlighting issues of concern and making submissions to relevant government departments, complete with recommendations to enhance support for young parents and elevate outcomes for both parents and their children.

In 2022, the National Manager crafted a Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) with a primary focus on removing obstacles to education and increasing social protection payment rates as a measure to combat poverty.

Additionally, the Manager submitted a report to the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government concerning the development of a Housing and Homelessness Youth Strategy.

The TPSP is part of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, which submitted a joint report combining input from all coalition members. The Youth Homelessness Strategy, launched in November 2022, outlines a roadmap to eliminate youth homelessness and is the first such strategy in over a decade that includes early interventions and preventions.



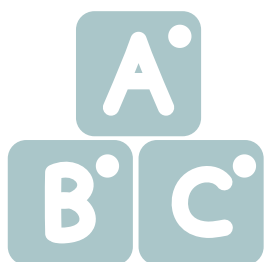
# 10 Case Studies

## Hannah

Hannah, has a long history of involvement with her local community services where she received support through youth work interventions. Hannah, became pregnant at 17 years old and has experienced several adverse childhood experiences throughout her own childhood such as parental substance misuse, parental mental health, and parental death. Hannah, would describe her relationship with her mother as fractured and feels that one of the only sources of support that she has is with her TPSP (Teen Parent Support programme) worker. Hannah currently lives with her mother, daughter, and brother in a local authority rented home. This placement is often at risk of breaking down due to the fractured relationship, Hannah, has with her mother. Hannah, has engaged in TPSP group work for the last number of years as well as targeted parenting groups within the wider organisation that hosts her local TPSP.

Hannah has also experienced past domestic violence from ex-partners. Support was given to Hannah to access the local Domestic Violence Worker as well as local counselling services. The family are currently on the waiting list for 'Systemic Trauma Therapy'.

Hannah, is currently engaging with her worker for weekly 1-1 'Parents Under Pressure' sessions which looks at various aspects of parenting, as well as looking at how, Hannah, was parented herself, and the impact that this has had on her parenting style. Her TPSP worker has supported Hannah's daughter, Tia, with the morning programme which support school attendance and engagement in school as well as access and funding for an after-school placement. Hannah's TPSP worker has also supported her to access education, and she is currently completing a PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) in pre-nursing QQI level 5 at a local college and intends to complete her QQI level 6 next year. Support was given through the means of a laptop and support with funding of college placement from the School Completion programme funding (SCP).



# Hayley

Hayley, was referred to her local TPSP programme by a family member when she became pregnant at 19 years old. Hayley, has a history of adverse childhood experiences such as parental separation, parental substance misuse and parental incarceration. At the time of the referral, Hayley, was in a very volatile relationship with her unborn baby's father. In this relationship, Hayley, was subjected to emotional and physical abuse. The family were opened to Tusla due to the level of concern and the family engaged in several Child Protection Case Conferences. Hayley, was offered group work and 1-1 work to support her and her son's needs. A lot of work was done in relation to referrals to other services such as Speech and Language, Disability Network Team, NCS (National Childcare Scheme), Dept of Social Protection and the Housing Authority to support the family.

Support was also given to Hayley in relation to the domestic violence and court support was given to help also to obtain a barring order. Ongoing emotional support is given to Hayley to help navigate parenting a child alone with little support from extended family. Support was also given to Hayley's son Dillon to obtain a creche placement and funding was sought to ensure Dillon could attend. Her TPSP worker supported Hayley to return to education where she completed a QQI level 5 in pre-nursing at a local college. The TPSP worker supported Hayley in getting funding for her college placement and supported her with a laptop to complete course work with the help of SCP (School Completion programme) funding. Hayley is hopeful to return to complete a course in Early Education.

At present Hayley is pregnant with her second baby and is due to give birth in early April, she has attended antenatal classes to prepare for the birth and support was given through the means of a maternity 'baby bag'.

Her TPSP worker has made pre-birth referrals for Hayley's unborn baby for an Early Years placement to support her returned engagement in college.

Hayley's participation with the TPSP service has always been sporadic, her non-engagement is most evident when she is back in a relationship with her ex-partner. Currently, Hayley's partner is incarcerated and since his incarceration she has engaged really well with the service. During these times of limited engagement, her TPSP worker would make several phone calls to Hayley as well as calling to the family home to try contact her to encourage her to re-engage as her TPSP worker has become aware that when Hayley dis-engages, this is normally an indicator that she needs support.



# Alison

Alison was referred to her local TPSP by a Social Worker in her Maternity Hospital at 32 weeks pregnant, she was 19 years old. At that time, she lived in a one-bedroomed converted attic with her mother and two sisters who both attended primary school. Alison was waiting on her papers as she had entered the Country from Southern Africa through family reunification and needed assistance. Her TPSP worker referred her to NASC, migrants and refugee rights centre, where she sought assistance.

An immediate concern was inadequate housing, and preparing Alison antenatally. A lot of work was carried out in a short period of time through practical work which covered the everyday care of the baby and birth preparation.

When Alison was 34 weeks pregnant, her mother received an eviction notice and they had 4 months to leave their flat. This left the family in immediate risk of homeless and therefore both the hospital Social Worker and her TPSP project worker, sent a 'Child Protect Notification' solely due to inadequate housing for both Alison and her baby. With this, Alison's TPSP worker engaged Threshold on behalf of the family and eventually notification was sent to the City Council to highlight their current housing situation. The TPSP worker supported Alison with her housing application, where significant amount of time was spent in communication due to miscommunications within the City Council stating they did not receive certain elements of Alison's paperwork despite being present when handing them into the main office. The TPSP worker contacted the City Council on numerous occasions to advocate on Alison's behalf and highlight concerns regarding Alison and her unborn baby returning to the unsuitable accommodation and the looming eviction.

Alison's mother was offered the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, however, there were no rental properties available anywhere in the City/County. Alison's mother was willing to move anywhere despite having her younger daughters settled into a school for over a year.

In the meantime, a letter was sent to the TPSP worker stating that there was no need for Social Work involvement and therefore her case was closed. With this, a potential option for a mother and baby unit was shut down due to referral criteria.

Following on from this, the TPSP worker contacted local B&B's to seek alternative emergency accommodation, however, each were at maximum capacity. Alison's TPSP worker attended the City's Accommodation Placement Service (APS) for homeless people with the entire family and Alison. At this meeting, Alison's Mother felt very undermined and unheard. This was evident during the meeting. She noted that without the help from the TPSP service, she would have nobody to turn to for support.

After this visit, the TPSP worker emailed Threshold again to be told there was nothing they could do and noted that APS will only see them once they have passed the eviction notice date, meaning that Alison, her newborn baby, her mother and two sisters would be left homeless.

At this time, the TPSP worker had contacted the Social worker from the hospital who was on handling their case, she sent many emails expressing concern to the City Council and had a letter from the Social Work department supporting the case, however nobody was able to accommodate this family as an early intervention to prevent homelessness.

In the meantime, the TPSP worker met with Alison weekly and completed the TPSP projects Babywise modules in order to prepare her for her baby's arrival. The TPSP worker linked in with Community Connect on her behalf and stored items for her in the office until she found suitable accommodation. This time was extremely stressful for Alison and a lot of time was spent worrying about what to do once her baby arrives as and her baby will be sleeping in an attic loft in the middle of a heatwave.

Alison had her baby safely in hospital, however after a few days, the hospital was keen for her discharge. Alison highlighted her unsuitable accommodation and the TPSP worker spoke with the duty Social Worker about the housing situation; Alison was given two options, put in writing to the TPSP worker. These options were: To leave the hospital with her baby or to 'Abandon' her baby. My client did not fully understand the concept of 'Abandon' and what this meant in the future. She had a conversation with the TPSP worker wondering if it was the best option for her baby at the time, the TPSP worker educated her around how the Irish System operated and Tusla Child & Family agency. The TPSP worker left the decision to her. Alison chose to bring her baby back to the unsuitable accommodation until the eviction date. The TPSP worker visited many times to ensure safety for everyone given the circumstances. Her mother thanked the worker for her input and support during this time as they both felt they were pressured into making such a huge decision.

Alison's mother attended a meeting with APS one week before their eviction date, they were informed that they are going to a hotel. The TPSP worker went for a visit and all five family members were in hotel room with 2 beds. Again, Alison's TPSP worker supported Alison and her family during this time as her mother's mental health began to deteriorate. The TPSP worker made several phone calls to APS and the city council. Within a few weeks, they were moved to a homeless shelter for woman and children that had two bedrooms and their own cooking area.

At present Alison continues to live there with her family and the TPSP continues to support them with whatever is needed.

# Abiola

Abiola had just turned 20 when she was referred to the Teen Parenting Support programme. On presentation to the service Abiola and her partner were both working and living in rented accommodation. Abiola said that she worries about money and upcoming bills. She spoke about past challenges with her mental health and she said she had previously availed of support from Jigsaw.

Throughout Abiola's pregnancy she had intermittent contact with the service, however, Abiola did take support from TPSP to access Antenatal Education, financial advice, emotional and practical support and completing social protection application forms.

Following the birth of her baby, Abiola's situation became a little more stressful, having to adjust to being a new mother with little family support as her family did not live nearby, and her partner was working long hours. She highlighted that since becoming new parents, both she and her partner were arguing more. She noticed a change in how he spoke to her and she described the atmosphere to be toxic if he was challenged in any way. Due to lack of engagement with TPSP over a few months, TPSP project worker asked Abiola if she needed the TPSP support, Abiola confided that she did and agreed to meet with the project worker.

Abiola confided that they had now moved in with her partner's family due to their low income and a need for support with childcare, as Abiola had returned to work when her baby was 6 months old. She spoke about the challenges living with her in-laws as the paternal grandfather was verbally abusive to his family and she felt this was not a good environment for her daughter to live in. She was keen to live independently with her family, however, her partner did not want to move out of his parents home. The TPSP Project worker assisted Abiola in applying for their housing needs to be assessed with the local authority, however, there was a delay in submitting this application due to her partner's resistance.

When Abiola's daughter was 10 months old, Abiola became pregnant with her second child. Abiola's engagement with the TPSP improved and it became apparent that Abiola was in an abusive relationship. She disclosed emotional, financial, social and physical abuse by her partner. A Tusla referral was made upon disclosure of this abuse. The case was assessed by Tusla Social work and the TPSP project worker was advised that the concerns raised did not meet the threshold for Tusla Social Work intervention.

TPSP workers linked in with Abiola regularly and started to engage on a more regular basis. She opened up about the challenges that she was having with her partner and his family and the reluctance in applying for social housing. Abiola went on to have her second child and her situation got more complex as the abuse escalated.

Abiola is now a full-time stay at home mother of two children. She has no family support and little friends and spends her week at home with her children. Abiola's mental health can be poor due to the stress of living in this challenging environment, the lack of money, and having no break from the children. Staff contacted Tusla re-referring Abiola's case again and they said that it is not within their threshold.

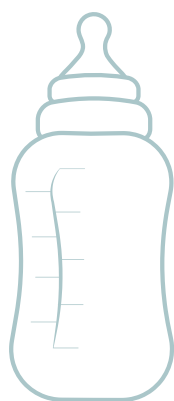
Staff worked with Abiola around the ongoing abuse and linked her in with Domestic Violence services where she started to get regular support around her situation. Abiola had on-going issues with housing after managing to secure private rented accommodation they struggled with dampness, lack of maintenance completion by the landlord, and were issued with a notice to quit after being in the accommodation for approx. 12months. The TPSP had referred the case to the Simon Community for support with housing but they could not take the case due to the housing crisis and the lack of rented properties.

The TPSP engaged Threshold and are liaising with the County Council, and have supported Abiola in getting her eviction date extended for another 4 months following new housing laws brought in by the Government in October 2022.

Abiola's oldest daughter has a language delay and was referred to a Speech and Language centre in her area through the PHN where her daughter is now getting ongoing support with her speech.

Through the TPSP service, Abiola has also been able to pursue securing her driving theory test and has completed her lessons and is now being supported with her Driving test.

Domestic Violence services are supporting Abiola in how she can leave the relationship safely. In the meantime, TPSP staff continue to support and engage Abiola on a weekly basis.





## Ciara

Ciara was referred to her local TPSP service from the Medical Social Work department in her maternity hospital. She is 15 years old and was due her baby in April 2022. Ciara was in the care of her grandmother prior to her referral to the TPSP, but this relationship had broken down. Ciara then began residing with her boyfriend and his family. Her social worker deemed this a safe and stable place for her to live. Ciara has a good support network around her with her boyfriend's family. Her boyfriends' mother has applied for guardianship of her, and she will continue to live there for the foreseeable future. They are also supporting her and her boyfriend financially which can be stressful for them. They facilitate all of her appointments, and this has been an immense help to her. Ciara's TPSP worker linked her boyfriend in with the TPSP too.

Ciara attends YouthReach, however, she been struggling with her attendance due to her pregnancy, not feeling well enough to attend. She felt as though she was falling behind and was struggling to keep up with her Junior Certificate course work. The TPSP supported her around this and offered her extra educational support with grinds, however, she chooses to defer her education and repeat the year in 2023.

As she is not yet 16, Ciara is not receiving a payment for her YouthReach attendance. She is struggling financially as she has no source of income at present. The TPSP linked in with her YouthReach around this and asked if it was possible for them to provide her with a payment to incentivise her attendance, however, this was not possible.

The TPSP provided Ciara with support through vouchers for clothes and food. The TPSP also provided her with baby clothes, a cot, buggy and other baby items that were donated to the TPSP. The TPSP assisted Ciara in applying for her entitlement to a social protection payment when she gave birth.

The TPSP worker has also linked Ciara in with the local Community Mothers programme and Ciara meets with them regularly where she received peer support and antenatal education during her pregnancy.



# Davinda

Davinda was referred to the TPSP from the medical social work department in her maternity hospital as she was struggling with her entitlements and accessing social protection payments. She was 20 years old and had recently experienced the breakdown of her relationship with her son's father. Davinda's TPSP worker provided emotional support to her around the relationship breakdown and assisted her in getting her one-parent family payment, supplementary welfare allowance, and her medical card.

The TPSP supported Davinda with her relationship with her ex-partner as he sent her a solicitor's letter as he was looking to get access to their son. The TPSP linked Davinda in with Community Law and Mediation and encouraged her to come to an agreement with her son's father through mediation as this would be beneficial to her and her young child. Her ex-partner declined to take part in mediation and they eventually had to go to court to make access arrangements. Following this, the father was awarded access for two days a week, with this arrangement being re-visited in a few months when their son was older. Davinda's TPSP worker provided her with support around the new parenting arrangement as she struggled with this decision as it made her very anxious and worried. The TPSP worker encouraged her to keep herself busy and get involved in their other peer support groups. Davinda took part in their 'City Slickers' group which is a group for young parents that covers a number of topics including: confidence building, communication skills and other issues that affect young people.

Davinda passed her driving theory test and began her driving lessons, with the help of the School Completion programme (SCP) funding. The TPSP supported her in completing a number of beauty courses and she is interested in completing some more courses in the future with help from SCP funding.



# Sarah

Sarah is 19 years old when she was referred to her local TPSP while she was expecting twin boys. Sarah was working at the beginning of her pregnancy, however, she had to stop working due to it being too difficult with her pregnancy. Sarah has ADHD so her TPSP worker supported her with getting a disability payment. Sarah also needed a new passport so her TPSP worker supported her with getting this and funded it for her too.

When Sarah was referred to the TPSP she was couch surfing at friends' houses as the relationship between herself and her mother had become strained. It was no longer possible for her to live at home due to her mother's mental health issues. Sarah's TPSP worker spoke with her mother and Sarah was provided with a letter stating that she could no longer live with her mother. When Sarah gave birth, medical social work became involved as Sarah didn't have a home to return to with her twin babies. The Homeless action team provided her accommodation in a local hotel and Sarah moved in following her discharge from hospital. Her twin boys remained in NICU for one week and were discharged following a meeting that the TPSP worker attended as a support to Sarah.

Sarah has a great support system from her partner and her sister who are permitted to stay with her in the hotel to help her with parenting and general support. Sarah is hoping to join the TPSP's 'City Slickers' group which focusses on confidence building and communication and will give her a support network of other young mothers. The TPSP continue to carry out home visits with Sarah and provide her with emotional support around becoming a new mom to twins.

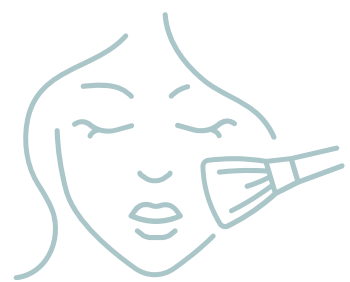


# Amy

Amy was 20 years old when she was referred by a social worker to her local TPSP. Amy gave birth to her baby boy prematurely, weighing just 2lbs 4oz at birth. When Amy's TPSP worker met with her she was homeless and couch surfing at the homes of family and friends. Amy's TPSP worker supported her with a leap card to assist her in travelling to the maternity hospital while her son was in the NICU. Amy was open to social work as they were assessing her parenting capacity. She was offered accommodation in a local hotel and moved in following her son's discharge from NICU. The TPSP continued to support Amy throughout this transition as it was a very stressful time for her.

The TPSP worker linked Amy in with their Community Mother's programme and Amy engaged well with them, getting guidance on weaning, sleeping routines and overall parenting skills. Amy's TPSP worker attended case conferences with her and supported her throughout the process. Overall the outcomes of the conferences and engagement was very positive and her son was de-listed from social work involvement. Amy engages very well with her group-work and attended all of the winter City Slickers group, which is a group for young mothers. Amy's son attends regular physio appointments due to concerns about his development and Amy has attended some parent and toddler groups to help with his development, she engages well in these groups.

The TPSP assisted Amy with applying for social protection entitlements and she is now completing a makeup and beauty course, funded by the TPSP school completion programme funding. Amy has planned to go on to do another courses following completion of the make-up and beauty course as it is a part-time course allowing her to manage her education and parenting duties. The TPSP will continue to support her financially with her education through the school completion programme.



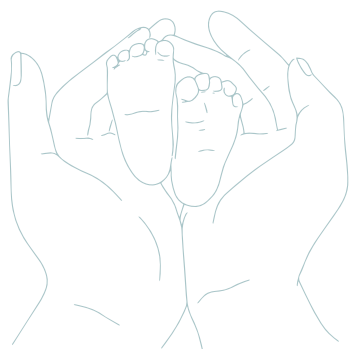
# Cara

Cara was 20 years old when she was originally referred to her local TPSP by her key worker in Focus Ireland during her pregnancy, however , she didn't engage at that time.

Following the birth of her son, Cara re-engaged with the TPSP who began to assess her needs and put plans in place to support her in her parenting role. Social work became involved with Cara following an incident where her infant son fell from the bed. Shortly after this, Cara received a letter from Tusla stating that the case was closed as there were no more concerns. Cara's TPSP worker supported her throughout the process as it was a very stressful time for her.

Cara was housed by Focus Ireland in accommodation where she will be able to remain for up to one year. Cara has a volatile relationship with the father of her baby. Her TPSP worker was supporting Cara in managing that relationship and Cara currently has a barring order against him. The TPSP supported Cara throughout the Christmas period as her son was hospitalised with RSV and was put on a ventilator. Cara was provided with items for her son in hospital since she was unable to leave him.

Cara is now working part-time in a Hotel and this is going well for her. The TPSP continue to support Cara through home visits and Cara attended a Christmas day trip with the TPSP project to see Santa with her son. Cara is planning to do a hair-dressing course in the coming months and the TPSP will support her financially with paying for this via the school completion programme. Going forward it is hoped that Cara attends their City Slickers group as this would be very beneficial for her.



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