



The Teen Parents Support Programme

Summary of Work 2016

Introduction The Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) consists of eleven separate projects funded by Tusla Child and Family Agency and the HSE and is located throughout the country in a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations (see TPSP contact details at the end of this Summary).

Each project offers interventions that promote and enhance the well-being of pregnant and parenting teens and their children. As part of an interagency approach to family support, TPSP staff begin their engagement with the young people at a critical early point of pregnancy/parenthood. They then work with them to build their capacity both as young parents and as adolescents moving towards early adulthood.

During 2015 there were 322 new referrals to the TPSP. This brings to 6,800 the number of young parents who, together with their children, partners and families, have received this service since the TPSP was established in 2000. One of the aspirations of the TPSP is that eventually all teen parents in Ireland will have access to this type of support.

The TPSP works with young people who become parents when they are aged 19 years or under and, where needed, supports them until their children are 2 years of age.

Support is offered in all areas of the young person's life – parenting, health, relationships, education, training, childcare, accommodation, social welfare entitlements, legal issues and anything else about which the young person is concerned.

Grandparents and other family members involved with the young parents may also be supported.

Young people may make contact directly with the TPSP. Referrals are also made by professionals and anyone interested in the welfare of the young parent and his/her child.

The main aim of the TPSP is to provide early interventions, which are needs-led and outcome focused, to enhance and support the wellbeing of all young parents and their children, empower young parents in their parenting role and ensure equality of opportunity for parent and child.

Young parents whose needs are located at Levels 3 and 4 on the Hardiker scale are also supported with specific additional interventions (such as support with parenting skills) as part of an interagency approach to family support.

In 2016:

32% of all new referrals to the TPSP had needs located at Hardiker Level 3 and **6%** of all new referrals had needs located at Hardiker Level 4.

Summary of Teen Births in Ireland 2006-2016

Number of Births and Fertility Rates* for Women under 20 Years of Age

Year	Number of Births	Fertility Rate*
2006	2,362	16.4
2007	2,464	17.5
2008	2,426	17.0
2009	2,223	16.3
2010	2,019	15.0
2011	1,720	12.5
2012	1,639	12.2
2013	1,381	10.4
2014	1,253	9.3
2015	1,187	8.7
2016	1,098	7.8

Sources: CSO Vital Statistics, Yearly Summary 2016

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

Over the past decade the number of births to mothers under 20 years of age in Ireland has more than halved. When compared to European counterparts, however, the birth rate to teens in Ireland remains 'high to middling' (HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, National Strategy 2012-2016). Source: <http://www.crisispregnancy.ie>.

In 2016, when the births to teen mothers were registered, 132 mothers (12%) were described by the CSO as married or in a civil partnership and an additional 244 mothers (22%) were described as living at the same address as the father of their child.

Nationally, in 2016 there were 20 births to mothers aged 15 years and under and 16 of these young mothers (80%) were referred to the TPSP for support. There were 51 mothers aged 16 years who gave birth and 23 of them (45%) were referred to the TPSP while 68 (49%) of the 140 seventeen-year-olds who gave birth were also supported by the TPSP.



Donegal TPSP Literacy Initiative

Donegal Teen Parents Support Programme launch their Story Sack Initiative in Carndonagh Library. This initiative is aimed at highlighting the importance of literacy by showing parents just how important it is to read to children from an early age. This is done through a story sack which includes a story book, reading prop (such as a character from the storybook), details on all local libraries, a library card, nursery rhyme leaflet as well as tips and advice on how to introduce books to babies and toddlers.

Greta Petraviciute with her son Erik and Foróige's Jacqueline Doherty.

Summary of contact in 2016 with young parents and their families

969 The number of young parents, their children and other family members who were offered support in 2016

322 The number who presented for support for the first time:

- 288 mothers
- 20 fathers
- 14 other family members

10 The number who had engaged with the service previously and re-presented for support in 2016. These were all young mothers.

293 The number who were referred in earlier years and continued to receive support during 2016 and into 2017:

- 277 mothers
- 12 fathers
- 4 other family members

344 The number of young parents and other family members for whom support ended in 2015:

- 310 mothers
- 29 fathers
- 5 other family members

In addition, in 2016, as a result of the mother/father of their child engaging with the projects the TPSP had some contact with **355** other young parents:

- 298 fathers
- 57 mothers

The Table on the next page presents a profile of the 288 young mothers and 20 fathers at the point when they first engaged with the TPSP.

For the purpose of this Summary '*social care history*' refers to current or previous engagement with Tusla Family Support Services, including young people currently or previously in care.

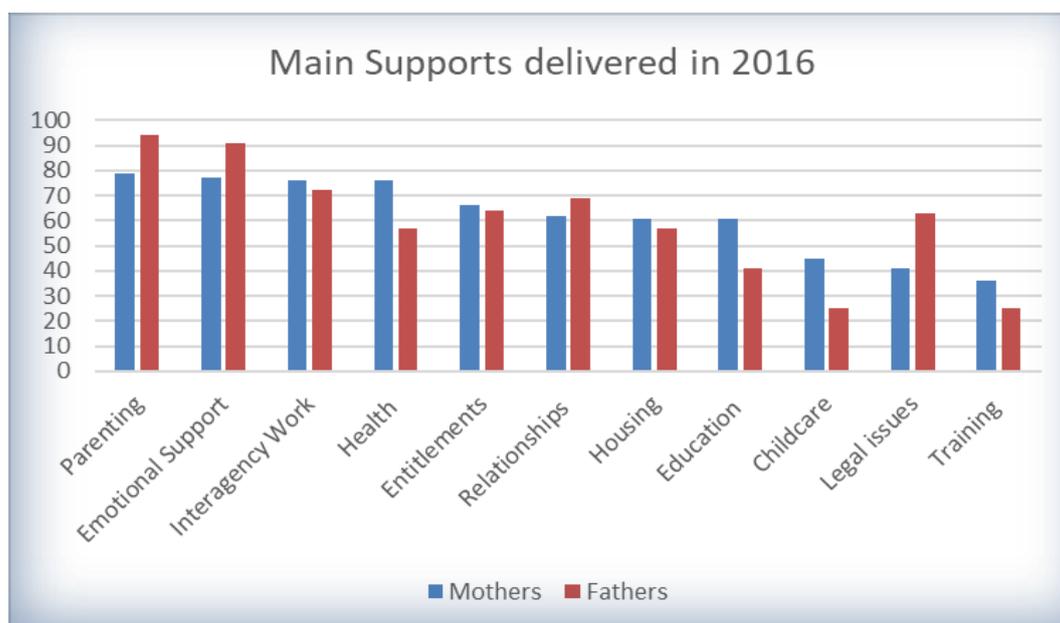
Care must be taken when interpreting Tables and Charts in this Summary due to the differences in the number of mothers and fathers involved.



Profile of young parents at time of referral to TPSP in 2016

Percentages are based on known data.

Characteristic	Category	Mothers (288)		Fathers (20)	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Age	15 or under	16	6	0	0
	16	23	8	3	15
	17	68	24	5	20
	18	64	29	1	20
	19	91	24	4	25
	Over 19	39	9	6	20
Level of Need	Hardiker 2	301	60	14	70
	Hardiker 3	108	33	6	30
	Hardiker 4	14	7	0	0
	Not known when data was collected	16			
Social Care History	Yes	74	35	5	33
	No	136	65	10	67
	Not known when data was collected	78		5	
Education/Training Status	In Education/Training	115	47	11	55
	Not in Education/Training	126	53	9	45
	Not known when data was collected	47			
Highest Educational Attainment	PLC	9	4	0	0
	Leaving Certificate	65	29	6	38
	Junior Certificate only	111	50	6	38
	Non-Irish qualification	5	2	2	12
	Other qualification	8	4	0	0
	No Certification	23	11	2	12
	Not known when data was collected	67		4	
Accommodation Type	Living in mother's family home	182	68	0	85
	Living in father's family home	15	5	17	0
	Living with other family member	13	5	0	0
	In care	12	4	1	5
	Private Rented-no assistance	11	4	0	0
	Private rented-HAP/Supplement	10	4	1	5
	Living with friends	7	3	0	0
	Homeless accommodation	5	2	0	0
	Supported accommodation	3	1	0	0
	Refuge	3	1	0	0
	Direct Provision	2	1	1	5
	Own Home-Local Authority	2	1	0	0
	Halting Site	1	1	0	0
	Not known when data was collected	22			
Background	Irish	222	82	17	85
	Irish Traveller	13	5	1	5
	African	8	3	1	5
	Eastern European	16	6	1	5
	Other European	7	2	0	0
	Asian	2	1	0	0
	Other	3	1	0	0
	Not known when data was collected	17			
Location	Urban	197	68	15	75
	Rural	91	32	5	25



The Chart above refers to 607 pregnant or parenting teens (575 mothers and 32 fathers) who either:

- engaged for the first time in 2016
- had engaged previously and needed to re-establish contact with TPSP in 2016 or
- were referred in previous years and were receiving ongoing support in 2016.

The Chart shows, in percentage terms, the areas in which these young parents received support in 2016. While most support was delivered on a one-to-one basis, where opportunities arose TPSP staff organised Groups and Programmes, including evidence-based parenting programmes, for young parents (fathers as well as mothers) either on an ongoing basis or in response to specific identified needs.

The TPSP works in close partnership with all local institutions, agencies and services available to a young parent such as family support services, health services, schools, housing agencies and relevant non-governmental agencies. This partnership takes the form of collaboration and mutual referral systems. In 2016, the TPSP liaised with other agencies on behalf of 76% of its service users. For young mothers, in order of frequency, most contact took place with the following: Tusla Family Support Services (including social workers, aftercare workers and Meitheal); Maternity Services; educational institutions (2nd level and 3rd level institutions, combined), Department of Social Protection representatives; Housing Agencies; Training Organisations; Public Health Nurses; Childcare Providers and Counselling Services. There was also contact with Youth Services, services for those who are victims of domestic violence, Community Mother/Parent Programmes, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and CICs.

For young fathers, in order of frequency, most contact took place with the following: Training Organisations, DSP representatives (formerly CWOs), Maternity Services, Meitheal, Homeless Agencies and Youth Services.

The above Chart includes 52 service users (49 mothers and 3 fathers) from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. These include 13 mothers and 1 father who are Irish Travellers, 9 young mothers who identified as being from the Roma community as well as 9 young parents who were originally from Africa. These young people received additional support with accessing services, understanding Irish birth and parenting practices, resolving dual cultural issues (where parents are from different ethnic backgrounds) as well as support in relation to habitual residence requirements.

Outcomes for parents whose contact with the TPSP ended in 2016

During 2016, a total of 344 service users ceased contact with the TPSP. These consisted of 310 young mothers, 29 fathers and 5 other family members. The following Table gives a short profile of the young mothers and fathers including their ages at time of referral, levels of need at time of referral and when support ceased; accommodation at time of referral and when support ceased as well as the reasons why support ceased.

Percentages are based on known data.

Characteristic	Category	Mothers (310)		Fathers (29)	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Age at time of referral	15 years or under	18	6	1	4
	16 years	32	10	3	10
	17 years	69	22	5	17
	18 years	80	26	1	4
	19 years	72	23	11	38
	Over 19 years	39	13	8	27
Level of Need at time of referral	Hardiker 1	0	0	0	0
	Hardiker 2	186	63	20	69
	Hardiker 3	99	33	8	28
	Hardiker 4	13	4	1	3
	Not known when data was collected	12			
Level of Need when support ceased	Hardiker 1	28	9	4	14
	Hardiker 2	199	66	16	55
	Hardiker 3	66	22	8	28
	Hardiker 4	10	3	1	3
	Not known when data was collected	7			
Accommodation at time of referral	Living in family home	189	68	19	68
	Living with other family member	14	5	2	7
	Home of child's other parent	10	3	0	0
	Private rented accommodation	44	15	6	21
	In care	7	3	0	0
	Homeless	6	3	0	0
	Refuge	3	1	0	0
	Supported accommodation	3	1	0	0
	Direct Provision	2	1	0	0
	Other	4	1	1	4
	Not known when data was collected	28		1	
Accommodation when support ceased	Living in family home	138	49	18	63
	Living with other family member	19	6	1	4
	Home of child's other parent	14	5	0	0
	Private rented accommodation	80	28	6	21
	In care	6	2	1	4
	Homeless	5	2	0	0
	Refuge	4	2	0	0
	Supported accommodation	6	2	1	4
	Direct Provision	1	1	0	0
	Halting Site	2	1	0	0
	Other	6	2	1	4
Not known when data was collected	29		1		
Reasons support ceased	Needs were met	103	33	13	49
	Needs partially met	24	8	2	6
	Referred to other support	19	6	4	12
	Moved out of area	36	12	1	3
	Did not avail of service	47	15	5	17
	Parent ceased contact	74	24	3	10
	Other	7	2	1	3



Education and Training

The TPSP places particular emphasis on supporting young parents to complete their education, if that is their choice. Alongside support with parenting, this enables them to focus on their own development as young people and contributes to future equality of opportunity for parent and child. During the 2015/16 academic year, 8 of the 11 TPSPs received funding from the School Completion Programme (SCP) through Tusla's Education Welfare Services. The aim of the SCP is to increase the numbers of young people staying in primary and second level school and in doing so improve the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or the equivalent.

<http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services>

Supports funded through the SCP included contributions towards childcare, grinds, books, transport and uniforms. TPSP staff also organised revision groups, peer support groups, personal development courses, pre-vocational taster programmes and guidance counselling. In addition, all the young parents known to have a childcare need received information and support in relation to accessing childcare which would enable them to complete their education.

Educational outcomes for young parents who engaged with the TPSP

In 2016, TPSP support ceased for 310 young mothers and 29 young fathers. The following table compares their highest educational attainment when they were first referred to the TPSP and when contact ceased in 2016.

Highest Educational Attainment	When referred to the TPSP		When support ceased in 2016	
	Mothers (310)	Fathers (29)	Mothers (310)	Fathers (29)
Completed 3 rd Level Education	0	0	7	0
Completed PLC Course	12	1	21	1
Completed Leaving Certificate	78	7	92	9
Completed Junior Cert only	129	13	103	10
No 2nd Level Qualification	18	3	18	2
Non-Irish Qualification	5	1	6	1
Other	5	1	12	2
Not known***	63	3	51	4

***refers to those who did not engage with the service or those whose non-Irish qualifications were unclear.

National Co-ordination of the TPSP

The national co-ordinator of the TPSP is based in Treoir. The main purpose of this post is to provide a central focal point for the promotion of the work of the TPSP and the enhancement of the lives of all young parents including those living outside areas covered by a TPSP.

During 2016, This was achieved mainly through:

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

TPSP Meetings

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

Policy and advocacy

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

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

The TPSP also had direct contact with:

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

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

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

The TPSP National Coordinator also contributed to a Review of the Barriers to Third Level Education experienced by lone parents which was commissioned jointly by the Department of Education & Skills,

the Department of Children & Youth Affairs and the Department of Children & Youth affairs and carried out by NUI Maynooth.

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

Reporting to Tusla

In addition to responding to queries on an ongoing basis, in 2016 the National Coordinator provided the Corporate Planning and Corporate Performance Section (CPCP) of Tusla with quarterly updates on the numbers of young parents supported by the TPSP projects.

TPSP Website

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

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

Home Tuition Scheme for Maternity Related Absences

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

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

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

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



Training for TPSP staff

The National Coordinator arranges training for TPSP staff in response to identified needs.

In April 2016, Veronica Black, Treoir's Information and Training Officer, delivered an Information Workshop in relation to the implications of the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015 for service users of the TPSP.

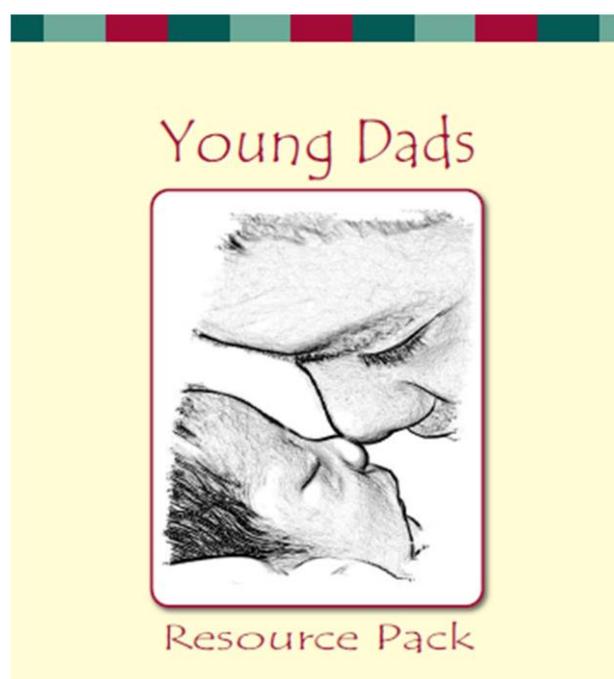
Veronica also gave an input on the Act to the National Advisory Committee of the TPSP.

Sharing of TPSP expertise

During 2016, the TPSP organized two workshops targeting all those working with young parents. The first of these, the Focus on Fathers Workshop, built on materials developed previously by the Louth TPSP and funded at that time by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. These workshops were co-facilitated by Veronica Black, Treoir's Information and Training Officer and Finian Murray, Men's Health Development Worker, HSE Dublin North East. To date, 32 non-TPSP workers have completed this training.

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

Both these Workshops have proved to be a very efficient way of disseminating learning and good practice from the TPSP to staff in areas where there are no specific support services for teen parents. They are also a way in which young parents living in these areas can benefit to some extent from the resources and expertise of the TPSP.



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