



The Teen Parents Support Programme

Summary of Work 2013

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 2013 a total of 1,294 young parents, their children and families had access to support from the TPSP. This brings to 5,777 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 2013:

35% of all referrals who presented to the TPSP for the first time had needs located at Hardiker Level 3 and

9% of all referrals had needs located at Hardiker Level 4.

Summary of Teen Births in Ireland 2003-2013

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

Year	Number of Births	Fertility Rate*
2003	2,802	19.0
2004	2,560	17.4
2005	2,427	16.8
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

Sources: CSO Vital Statistics, Yearly Summary 2013

*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 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). The most recent comparative teenage birth data available for selected countries is from the UN Statistical Yearbook 2006. The country with the lowest teen birth rate in 2006 was the Netherlands (3.8 per 1000) and the highest was the UK (26.7 per 1000). The teen birth rate in Ireland in the same year was 16.4 per 1000 girls aged 15-19.

Source: <http://www.crisispregnancy.ie>

In 2013, when the births to teen mothers were registered, 430 (31%) mothers were either married, in a civil partnership or living at the same address as the father of their child. This was higher at 34% for 18 year olds and 19 year olds, combined.

While 8% of teen births in 2013 were to mothers aged 16 years or under, 17% of all referrals to the TPSP were in this age group.

Young Fathers from Ballyfermot with Tracy Skerrett, TPSP Project Worker



Summary of contact in 2013 with young parents and their families

- 1294** The number of young parents, their children and other family members who were offered support in 2013.
- 392** The number who presented for support for the first time:
- 346 mothers
 - 41 fathers
 - 5 other family members
- 32** The number who had engaged with the service previously and re-presented for support in 2013:
- 31 young mothers
 - 1 maternal grandmother
- 327** The number who were referred in earlier years and continued to receive support during 2013 and into 2014:
- 290 mothers
 - 26 fathers
 - 11 other family members
- 543** The number of young parents and other family members for whom support ended in 2013:
- 463 mothers
 - 53 fathers
 - 27 other family members

In addition, in 2013, as a result of the mother/father of their child engaging with the projects the TPSP had some contact with **456** other young parents:

- 97 mothers
- 359 fathers

The Table on the next page presents a profile of the 346 young mothers and 41 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 Child and Family (C&FA) Support Services, including young people currently or previously in care.

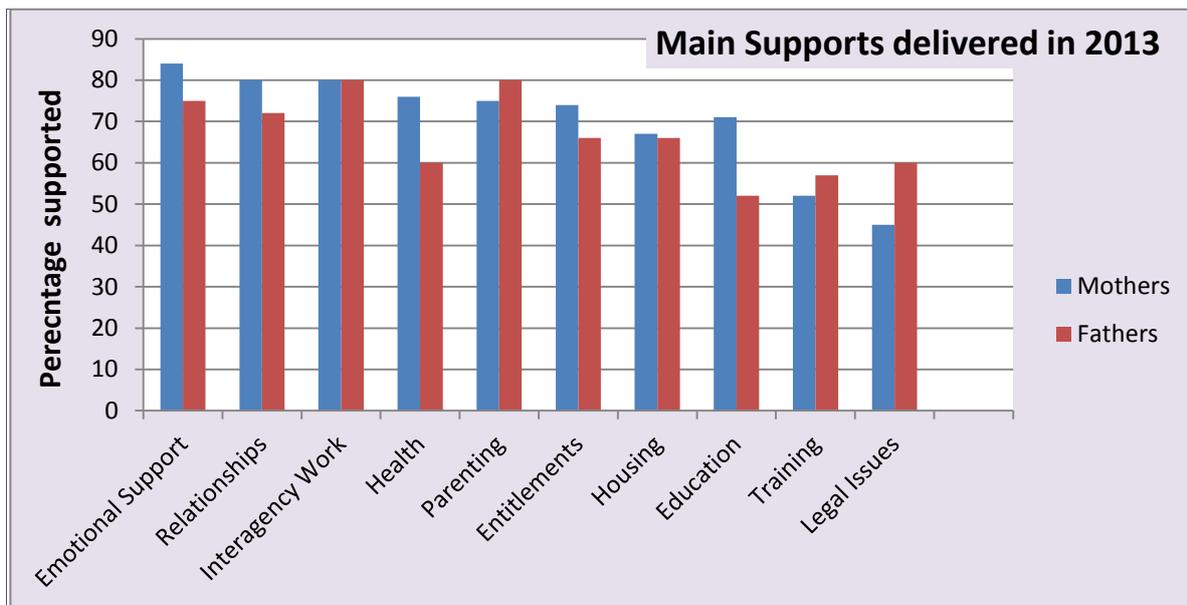
Care must be taken when interpreting Tables and Charts in this Summary due to the differences in the number of mothers and fathers involved.



Profile of young parents at time of referral to TPSP in 2013

Percentages are based on known data.

Characteristic	Category	Mothers (346)		Fathers (41)	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Age	15 or under	17	5	1	2
	16	43	12	6	15
	17	56	16	2	5
	18	72	21	8	20
	19	105	30	12	29
	Over 19	53	16	12	29
Pregnancy Status	Antenatal 1 st Child	208	69	18	44
	Postnatal 1 st Child	82	27	18	44
	Repeat Pregnancy	9	3	4	10
	Other	3	1	1	2
	Not known when data was collected	44			
Level of Need	Hardiker 2	167	56	27	66
	Hardiker 3	104	35	13	32
	Hardiker 4	28	9	1	2
	Not known when data was collected	47			
Social Care History	Yes	88	35	12	38
	No	167	65	20	62
	Not known when data was collected	91		9	
Education/Training Status	In Education/Training	109	39	21	51
	Not in Education/Training	168	61	20	49
	Not known when data was collected	69			
Highest Educational Attainment	3 rd Level/PLC	14	6	1	3
	Leaving Certificate	88	36	8	24
	Junior Certificate only	125	50	16	47
	No Certification	8	3	4	12
	Other	13	5	5	14
	Not known when data was collected	98		7	
Accommodation Type	Living in family home	191	64	24	59
	Living with other family member	20	7	2	5
	Own home	4	1	1	2
	Private rented accommodation	57	19	13	32
	Temporary accommodation	11	4	1	2
	Supported accommodation	5	2	0	0
	In care	5	2	0	0
	Other	3	1	0	0
	Not known when data was collected	50			
Background	Irish	248	82	35	86
	Irish Traveller	20	7	1	2
	African	8	3	2	5
	Eastern European	17	6	2	5
	UK	4	1	1	2
	Other	4	1	0	0
	Not known when data was collected	45		0	
Location	Urban	237	70	29	71
	Rural	90	30	12	29



The Chart above refers to 734 pregnant or parenting teens (667 mothers and 67 fathers) who either:

- engaged for the first time in 2013
- had engaged previously and needed to re-establish contact with TPSP in 2013 or
- were referred in previous years and were receiving ongoing support in 2013.

The Chart shows, in percentage terms, the main supports received by these young parents in 2013.

While most support was delivered on a one-to-one basis, where opportunities arose TPSP staff organised Groups and 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 that are available to a young parent such as schools, family support services, housing agencies and relevant non-governmental agencies. This partnership takes the form of joint collaboration and mutual referral systems. In 2013, the TPSP liaised with other services on behalf of 80% of service users. For young mothers, in order of frequency, most contact took place with the following: educational settings (2nd level and 3rd level institutions, combined), C&FA family Support services (including social workers and aftercare workers), Department of Social Protection representatives, maternity services, Local Authorities, public health nurses, training organisations, childcare providers and youth services. There was also contact with counselling services, disability services, services for those who are homeless and services for those who are victims of domestic violence and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

For young fathers, in order of frequency, most contact took place with the following: C&FA family support services (including social workers and aftercare workers), secondary schools, Local Authorities, youth services and training organisations. There was also contact with public health nurses, maternity services, counselling services, Department of Social Protection representatives and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The above Chart includes 150 young parents (142 mothers and 8 fathers) from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including 29 mothers and 7 father who are Irish Travellers. Of these 150 young parents, 73% 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.

Carla and Jack

From the age of fifteen Carla lived with various relatives and friends as her relationship with her parents had broken down. Carla's parents are separated and both have significant addiction and mental health difficulties. At age 17 Carla became pregnant. Throughout her pregnancy she continued to live in temporary accommodation with friends and received some support from her maternal grandmother. Carla heard about the TPSP in Finglas through a friend and contacted the Project herself.

At an initial meeting with TPSP staff, Carla expressed her concern about having no appropriate accommodation for herself and her baby. She had split up from her baby's father and was aware that she would be unable to remain at her friend's home once her baby was born. She wanted to find suitable accommodation but was reluctant to engage in support services prior to the birth. Following Jack's birth, Carla was in a state of panic about her housing situation. The TPSP assisted her with a housing application to Dublin City Council and made contact with the local Community Welfare Officer to look for assistance for a rental deposit. The TPSP helped Carla search for private rented accommodation but nothing was available or suitable within Carla's budget. Finding accommodation for parents on rent allowance is almost impossible as a large number of landlords do not accept it.

When Jack was 5 weeks old, Carla was asked to leave her friend's house and she presented herself and her infant to the Homeless Persons Unit. She was housed in a hotel room which was of good standard (clean, warm and safe) but without facilities for a newborn baby (such as a cot, steriliser, baby bath etc.). The TPSP referred Carla and Jack to Focus Ireland with a view to their getting supported accommodation. Initially Carla turned this down. Given her family background, she was concerned that she and her son might be exposed to residents with substance abuse problems. As a result she and Jack remained in the hotel for two months before being moved to B&B accommodation.

TPSP staff supported Carla to re-visit Focus Ireland, view the accommodation and reconsider her initial response. Carla accepted supported accommodation from Focus Ireland and was placed in a housing project. Baby Jack is now thriving; he is linked in with the PHN and is achieving his developmental milestones. Carla and Jack attend the TPSP regularly for both individual and group services. TPSP staff have identified a number of areas of parenting where Carla needs support and have a plan in place for her to start Barnardos' Partnership with Parents Programme. Carla has recently brought Jack to meet his maternal grandmother and grandfather and is being supported to rebuild these relationships.

Supporting young parents to find suitable accommodation in North Dublin is a huge issue. The availability of affordable property accepting rent allowance would have alleviated a lot of maternal stress in Carla and Jack's situation.

(Names have been changed to preserve confidentiality)

Outcomes for parents whose contact with the TPSP ended in 2013

During 2013, a total of 543 service users ceased contact with the TPSP. These consisted of 463 young mothers, 53 fathers and 27 other family members. The following Table gives a short profile of these 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.

Information on the educational progression of TPSP service users is on page 10.

Percentages are based on known data.

Characteristic	Category	Mothers (463)		Fathers (53)	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Age at time of referral	15 years or under	22	5	1	2
	16 years	63	14	8	15
	17 years	111	24	8	15
	18 years	116	25	12	23
	19 years	95	20	10	19
	Over 19 years	56	12	14	26
Level of Need at time of referral	Hardiker 1	0	0	0	0
	Hardiker 2	308	66	41	77
	Hardiker 3	137	30	9	17
	Hardiker 4	18	4	3	6
Level of Need when support ceased	Hardiker 1	58	13	7	13
	Hardiker 2	338	73	37	70
	Hardiker 3	59	12	7	13
	Hardiker 4	8	2	2	4
Accommodation at time of referral	Living in family home	281	60	36	67
	Living with other family member	25	5	3	6
	Own home	8	2	2	4
	Private rented accommodation	72	16	7	13
	Direct Provision	6	1	0	0
	Other temporary accommodation	7	2	0	0
	Supported accommodation	12	3	1	2
	In care	11	2	1	2
	Other	6	1	0	0
Not known when data was collected	35	8	3	6	
Accommodation when support ceased	Living in family home	162	35	26	49
	Living with other family member	13	2	3	6
	Own home	36	8	3	6
	Private rented accommodation	173	37	11	20
	Direct Provision	1	.03	0	0
	Other temporary accommodation	4	1	1	2
	Supported accommodation	12	3	1	2
	In care	3	.07	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0
Not known when data was collected	59	13	8	15	
Reasons support ceased	Needs were met	210	45	20	37
	Child > 2 years of age	36	8	5	9
	Referred to other support	16	3	2	4
	Moved out of area	35	8	4	8
	Did not avail of service	69	15	9	17
	Parent ceased contact	91	20	10	19
	Other	6	1	3	6

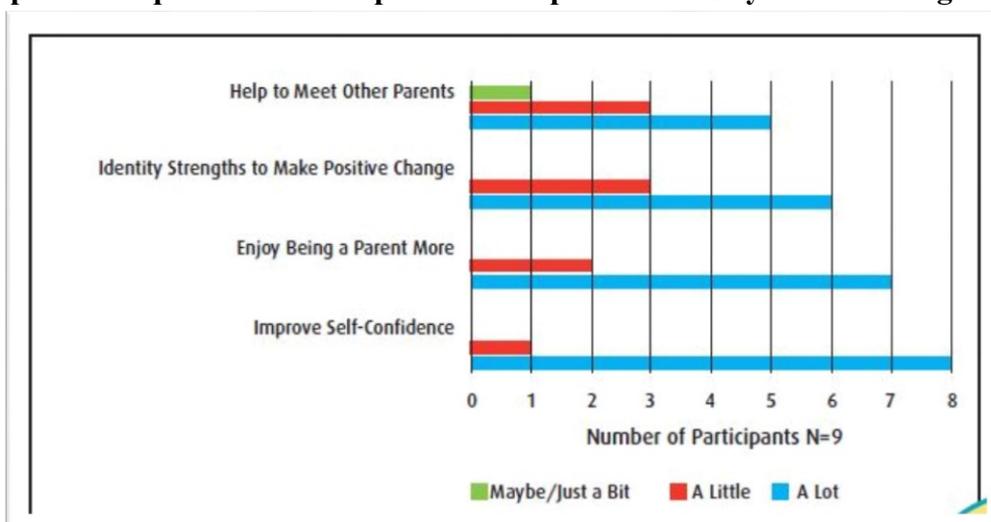
Limerick City Slickers



In 2013, the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme funded Limerick TPSP to organise 2 separate 10-week personal development and parenting programmes for young parents. Over the year a total of 18 young mothers aged between 16 and 22 years attended the groups. The programme included personal development and assertiveness training; relationships and sexual health; positive parenting skills; effective communication and confidence building skills as well as information on legal rights of unmarried parents and on their social welfare

entitlements. The schedule of activities was delivered through group work, peer education, field trips and one-to-one sessions using art, crafts, music and drama when appropriate. Each participant also received at least one home visit. In line with good practice each group was evaluated by an external evaluator.

Responses to questions on the perceived impact of the City Slickers Programme



“Participants stated they enjoyed parenthood more and many felt they could better identify strengths to make some positive life choices and changes in their lives. To a lesser degree but still quite positive, responses indicated that through the Programme, Participants were helped to meet other parents so that they could share experiences and develop new networks of support”. From Evaluation Report, Limerick City Slickers Programme, LSSC, 2013

During 2013 Limerick TPSP arranged Community Education Classes for 93 young parents through Limerick and Clare Education Training Boards (LCETB). These classes included Pediatric First Aid (10 attendees), Baby Weaning Programme (23 attendees), Drama and Personal Development (30 attendees) and Parent and Child Arts and Crafts (30 attendees). All of the administration work for these classes and liaison with LCETB was managed by the TPSP Limerick.

“Martina and Sandra also made sure that we understood what the Tutors were saying to us...even if I asked them the same questions every week.”

Donegal TPSP Youth Advisory Committee



Members of Donegal TPSP Youth Advisory Committee and their children visiting the Titanic Centre, Belfast.

In September 2013 staff at Donegal TPSP set up a TPSP Youth Advisory Committee in line with Foróige's Youth Participation Structure.

See <http://www.foroige.ie/our-work/youth-participation>

The purpose of the Donegal TPSP Youth Advisory Committee is to:

- have our say and get our views across
- help plan our activities
- represent the voice of teen parents across Finn Valley, Inishowen and Letterkenny
- listen to other teen parents and help them have their voices heard also.

Members of the Donegal TPSP Youth Advisory Committee are working on issues that affect many young parents not only in Donegal but throughout the country. These include issues such as entitlement to Rent Allowance and Back to Education Allowance when returning to education as well as access to childcare facilities while attending Letterkenny IT.

The Committee meets once a month under the guidance of the TPSP staff. Committee members have also completed training with Foróige's Youth Participation Officer Sarah Haslam.

Women's Health



For some time, staff in Doras Buí in Coolock had noticed an increase in individuals presenting with problems relating to depression, suicidal ideation and domestic violence. In June 2013, Doras Buí's Information and Support Worker and TPSP staff got together to create a Women's Health Morning. The aim of the event was to raise awareness and highlight support services available. Speakers included representatives from Women's Aid, The Marie

Keating Foundation and Shine. Over 40 participants including teen parents attended.



International Women's Day

Doras Buí in Coolock has been running events for International Women's Day for a number of years now. In 2013, a breakfast was held in the Centre itself and all of the participants from the TPSP were invited to attend as well as all of the lone parents who use the services of Doras Buí. Over 40 women, including teen parents, attended the event and heard from Linda, the Development Worker at Doras Buí, about the significance of the day as well as the history of International Women's Day in Ireland and abroad.



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 2012/13 academic year, 8 of the 11 TPSPs received funding from the School Completion Programme (SCP) through the Education Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency. 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>

With this SCP funding the TPSP targeted 327 young parents (307 mothers and 20 fathers) with education-related supports that could increase their prospects of remaining in or returning to education. These supports 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 of 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.

Of the 327 young people supported

- 153 were in education
- 174 were out of school
- 57 were under 17 years of age
- 15 were Irish Traveller students and
- 31 students were non-Irish nationals.

Of the 174 who were initially out of school, 74 returned to education or training during 2013.

Educational outcomes for young parents who engaged with the TPSP

In 2013, TPSP support ceased for 463 young mothers and 53 young fathers. The following table compares their highest educational attainment when they were first referred to the TPSP and when contact ceased in 2013.

Highest Educational Attainment	When referred to the TPSP		When support ceased in 2013	
	Mothers (463)	Fathers (53)	Mothers (463)	Fathers (53)
Completed 3 rd Level Education	0	0	7	0
Completed PLC Course	1	0	20	1
Completed Leaving Certificate	123	9	182	18
Completed Junior Cert only	204	24	131	17
No 2nd Level Qualification	34	4	23	3
Other	9	3	14	3
Not known***	92	13	86	11

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

THE TPSP TOOLKIT

A RESOURCE FOR WORKING WITH PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENAGERS

The TPSP Toolkit was completed in 2013. This is a resource for those working with pregnant or parenting teenagers and is funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme. The Toolkit aims to improve outcomes for teen parents (both mothers and fathers) by providing information, sample work sessions and activities that focus on the particular issues that arise in combining parenthood with their continuing development as young people.

During 2013 a Workshop on the use of the Toolkit was organised for all TPSP staff. Three additional Workshops were organised for professionals working with young parents and their families prioritising areas where there is not a TPSP. A total of 51 professionals working in counties Clare, Tipperary, Mayo, Longford and Roscommon and Sligo now have access to the TPSP Toolkit. These include 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.

'It was useful to reflect on how I might feel when told the story of a teenage pregnancy and how that could potentially impact on how I work with the young person and family.'

'I found the pace of presentation was appropriate and informative yet relaxed and this is how I would like to come across in my work with teens'.

Feedback from Workshop Participants



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