

# Teen Parents Support Programme Review of Work 2007 and 2008



**teen**parents  
support programme



## FOREWORD

2007 and 2008 proved to be good years for the TPSP. Funding received enabled three new Programmes to commence and also some existing Programmes were reinforced financially. The review of the work of the TPSP in 2007 and 2008, prepared by the National Co-ordinator, Margaret Morris, highlights the work done in the Programmes and the issues arising for both TPSP workers and for teen parents. In 2008 the TPSP received a grant from the National Lottery through the Department of Health and Children. The purpose of this grant is to enable a more in-depth analysis of the TPSP database. It will examine the work of the TPSP since 2005 and will guide the development of new TPSPs and the expansion of existing ones.

I would like to put on record my appreciation and that of the National Advisory Committee of a number of people without whom the TPSP would not be the valued resource which it is in the community. The National Co-ordinator, Margaret Morris, works tirelessly on behalf of both the Programme and teen parents. Her skills are very much appreciated by all who are in contact with her. The initial evaluation of the TPSP (later TPSP) drew attention to the importance of the personal commitment and skills of the Programme staff. This continues to be a crucial element of the success of the TPSP. The employing organisations, both voluntary and statutory, greatly support the concept of the TPSP and enable the TPSP staff to provide the level of service and dedication required. The direct involvement of the HSE has been a major development for the TPSP. The support and expertise of HSE personnel and particularly that of Claire O' Kelly, National Specialist for Children and Families, has been invaluable to the TPSP.

The representation of various Government Departments on the National Advisory Committee is of immense value as the representatives guide the National Advisory Committee in areas of development and regarding issues arising for teen parents. They also bring back to their Departments knowledge gained from the Programme Leaders and teen parents themselves relevant to other aspects of their work.

In this time of economic difficulty, providing targeted support for teen parents and their children remains our priority. The cooperation of all involved will be needed to work in a collaborative way with the spirit of partnership between service users, service providers, the HSE, Government Departments and all involved with teen parents and their children.

Rosemary Grant  
Chairperson  
National Advisory Committee

# INTRODUCTION

The Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) originated in July 1999 when the Teen Parents Support Initiative was established by the Department of Health and Children under the 'Children at Risk' strand of the National Childcare Investment Strategy (1998).

The Programme is a response to the vulnerability of families headed by teen parents and provides preventative support services for both the young parents and their children. The TPSP targets young people who become parents when they are aged 19 years or under and, generally, supports them until their children are 2 years of age. Support is offered in all areas of the young person's life – health, relationships, accommodation, social welfare entitlements, education, training, child development, parenting, childcare, and anything else about which the young person is concerned. Grandparents and other family members involved with the young parents may also be supported.

Typically referrals come from teen parents themselves, family members, antenatal clinics, maternity services, friends, teachers, youth services, training agencies, social workers, public health nurses and others interested in the welfare of teen parents.

Support is provided on a one-to-one basis, through group activities and through referral to other services.

One-to-one support is delivered through home visits, office appointments, 'drop in' facilities and meetings away from the TPSP site. Throughout their interaction with the young parents TPSP staff endeavour to:

- enhance the self esteem of the young parents
- build on their existing skills, experience and knowledge and
- encourage them to meet their own needs and maintain their own social and support networks.

Since 1999 the TPSP has grown from 3 pilot projects in Galway, Limerick and Dublin to 11 Programmes throughout the country and the appointment of a National Co-ordinator.

In 2007 responsibility for the TPSP was transferred from the Department of Health and Children to the HSE.

Nationally, the TPSP structure consists of a National Co-ordinator and a National Advisory Committee which provides a forum for information sharing and interagency collaboration.

At local level the TPSP structure consists of an employing organisation from either the statutory or voluntary sector, a Local Advisory Committee representing key stakeholders and the TPSP staff.

**Quotes used in this Report are taken from the Three-Year Review of the Cork TPSP and the 2008 Annual Report of the Finglas TPSP.**

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# Objectives of the Teen Parents Support Programme

## The objectives of the Teen Parents Support Programme are to:

- Provide services to enhance and support the wellbeing of young parents and their children, empower young parents in their parenting role and ensure equality of opportunity
- Identify the needs of the targeted young parents, the services available to them and any gaps in these services
- Encourage existing services to work collaboratively to enhance the capacity of the community networks and local agencies to respond to the needs of this client group
- Collect, collate and disseminate information on the experience of targeted young parents
- Monitor and evaluate Programmes, disseminate the findings of the evaluation and stimulate any necessary change at policy level.

*“When I had my baby I wish there had been some place where I could have got all the information I needed and where someone would have helped me to understand it all, it was very hard.”*

Young Mother, Cork



# Supports offered by the Teen Parents Support Programme

- 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, 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, the Moving On Young Mothers in Employment Projects, FÁS, Youthreach and other training bodies.

*"I was so relieved to meet the worker at the TPSP when I found my daughter was pregnant. We didn't know what she was entitled to or who would help her."*

Grandmother, Cork



# Teen Births 2007 - 2008

Since 2006, both the number of births to women under 20 years of age and the fertility rate\* for this age group increased slightly.

## 2000-2008

### No. of births and fertility rates for women under 20 years of age

Year	No. of births	Fertility rates
2000	3135	19.3
2001	3095	19.9
2002	2978	19.4
2003	2802	19.0
2004	2560	17.4
2005	2427	16.8
2006	2362	16.6
2007	2464	17.5
2008	2426	17.0

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

## 2000-2008

### Births by age of mother

Year	15 and under	16	17	18	19	Total
2000	66	212	511	995	1,351	3,135
2001	65	212	521	961	1,336	3,095
2002	63	225	504	932	1,254	2,978
2003	58	187	489	852	1,217	2,803
2004	53	202	399	779	1,127	2,560
2005	42	182	388	772	1,043	2,427
2006	48	161	368	677	1,108	2,362
2007	65	148	391	704	1,156	2,464
2008	46	182	382	704	1,112	2,426

Sources: CSO Vital Statistics.

The majority (75%) of teenagers giving birth in 2007 and 2008 were aged 18 and 19 years while just over 2% of teen births were to mothers aged 15 years or under. In 2007, 25% of the young parents were either living at the same address or married at the time of registering the birth of their child. For 18 and 19 year olds this figure increased to 28%. In 2008 the percentage of young parents who were either living together or married at the time of birth increased to 28% and, again, for 18 and 19 year olds the figure increased to 32%. The number of births to mothers aged 15 years and under decreased by almost 30% from 2007 to 2008.

### BIRTHS TO MOTHERS UNDER 20 YEARS OF AGE BY HSE AREA 2002 TO 2008

HSE AREA	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>HSE West</b>							
Limerick	158	157	127	124	134	126	112
North Tipp	50	38	38	34	27	42	39
Clare	60	62	54	59	56	52	53
Galway	101	95	95	89	87	102	99
Leitrim	16	9	8	9	10	14	9
Mayo	58	47	53	50	50	55	59
Roscommon	15	22	25	14	14	16	21
Sligo	25	34	25	27	38	27	37
Donegal	108	102	95	92	106	86	114
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>543</b>
<b>HSE South</b>							
Kerry	84	74	61	52	31	55	58
Cork	256	245	252	216	230	221	203
Waterford	76	83	79	75	77	76	74
Wexford	101	111	106	97	94	94	106
Carlow	51	49	45	38	37	44	24
Kilkenny	41	49	33	37	34	35	43
South Tipp	47	50	51	53	37	51	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>545</b>
<b>HSE Dublin North East</b>							
Fingal	156	179	132	130	124	154	142
Louth	103	95	83	91	65	94	82
Meath	93	76	73	65	70	78	60
Cavan	39	41	26	23	36	44	49
Monaghan	34	24	28	32	20	36	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>HSE Dublin Mid Leinster</b>							
South Dublin	256	253	220	216	213	218	207
Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown	71	64	80	77	70	50	53
Wicklow	83	71	71	80	69	62	60
Kildare	136	121	132	99	102	131	99
Laois	53	52	27	28	37	40	50
Westmeath	64	55	56	49	58	47	56
Longford	24	22	25	20	29	20	19
Offaly	62	43	45	49	45	50	34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>578</b>
<b>Dublin City</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>400</b>

Source : CSO Vital Statistics

# Main Developments in 2007 and 2008

## **Budget 2007 allocated an additional €1m to the TPSP. This money was used to:**

- mainstream the Louth and Doras Buí (Coolock) TPSPs and the post of National Co-ordinator all of which had been funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency
- pick up funding shortfalls in the Carlow/Kilkenny, Cork and Donegal TPSPs all of which started in 2006
- provide some additional funding to the Limerick, Coolock and Dublin West Programmes
- provide start-up funding in 2007 for 3 additional TPSPs in Ballyfermot, Finglas and Wexford.

In 2007 the TPSP received a total allocation of €1,761,837 in HSE funding.

This increased to €1,891,070 in 2008 when two of the three most recently established TPSPs received full-year costs.

## **New Programmes**

The Ballyfermot TPSP is managed by the Base Youth Service and covers Ballyfermot, Bluebell and Inchicore. The Finglas TPSP is managed by the Parents Alone Support Service (PASS) and covers all of Finglas. The Wexford TPSP is managed by Barnardos and covers North Wexford i.e. Gorey, Courtown, Camolin, Coolgreaney, Ferns, Kilmuckridge and Bunclody.

This brings to 11 the number of TPSPs targeting, for the most part, those areas of the country with the highest number of teen births.



*Rebecca Moore, TPSP Project Leader, Noreen Murphy, HSE and Barry Andrews, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs at the launch of the new Finglas TPSP.*

# Referrals to TPSP in 2007 and 2008

In 2007, there were 626 new referrals to the TPSP nationally and a further 573 new referrals in 2008. This brings to 2,806 the total number of young parents, who, together with their children and families, have received a service from the TPSP since it began.

In addition to working with these new parents and their families, TPSP staff continued to support those referred in earlier years and in total supported approximately 1,200 young parents annually.

Of these 999 new referrals in 2007/8, 67% were from an urban background and 33% from a rural background.

In most cases the young woman was referred as the main person requiring support and, where appropriate, the TPSP provided secondary support to her family and partner. A total of 826 young women were referred as the primary client. In an additional 54 cases the mother and maternal grandmother were equally supported as a unit and 26 young couples presented together for support. This brings to 906 the number of young mothers who received support either on their own, together with their own mother or with their partner. A further 59 young fathers, 22 maternal grandmothers, 6 paternal grandmothers and 6 others were supported in their own right separate from the mother. The large increase in 2008 in the number of young fathers who engaged in their own right with the TPSP is a testament to the increasing commitment by TPSP staff to the importance of young fathers in the lives of their children.



## Age of Referrals

Over one-fifth of all teen births in the country were referred to the TPSP in 2007/8. Younger parents are more likely to be referred to the TPSP rather than those in their later teens. For example, in 2007, 32 young mothers aged 15 years and under were referred to the TPSP while 65 mothers aged 15 and under gave birth that year. In 2008, 41 young mothers aged 15 and under were referred to the TPSP while 46 young mothers in that age group gave birth that year. Taking 2007 and 2008 together, 60% of referrals were antenatal and for 86% of them this was their first child.

**Chart 1**

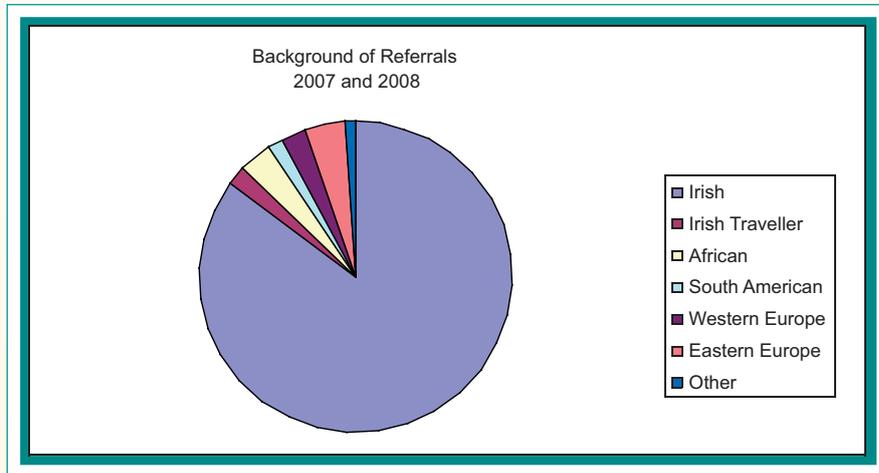
### Age of mother at Referral

Age at Referral	No. of Referrals by Year	
	2007	2008
15 years and under	32	41
16 years	45	61
17 years	98	137
18 years	82	111
19 years	97	99
Over 19 years	50	53

### Background of referrals

Taking 2007 and 2008 together, 15% of referrals belonged to minority ethnic groups. In addition to 20 Irish Traveller parents, the TPSP supported young parents of 21 different nationalities. Many of these young parents, particularly those who entered the country as separated children, have no family support in Ireland and rely heavily on TPSP staff.

**Chart 2**

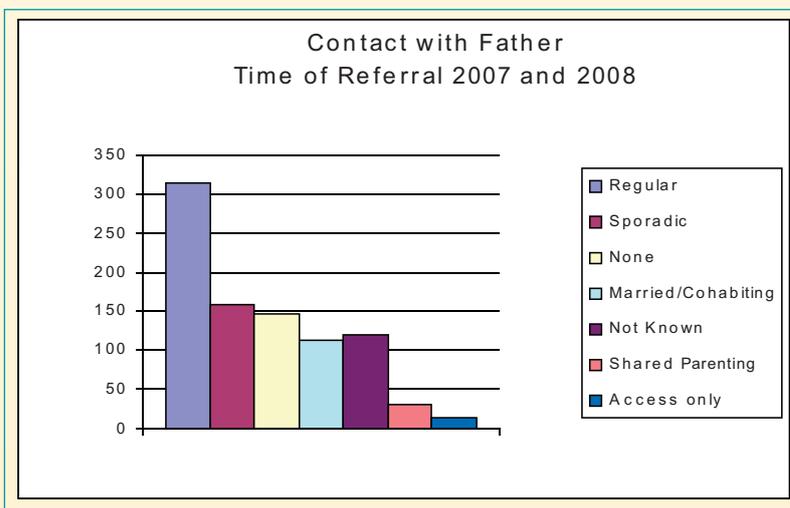


Since 2006 there has been an increase in the number of referrals of very young teenage parents from the Gort area of Co. Galway. The majority of these referrals are from the Brazilian community. The Galway TPSP set up an outreach service to meet the diverse needs of young parents from both the Brazilian and Irish communities in Gort. This outreach service provides a support service to this community on the first Monday of each month at a designated time. It is centrally located at the Family Resource Centre. There has been a very positive response to this initiative and important links have been established with the TPSP and the local Community School.

### Contact with Fathers

At the time of referral to the TPSP, 71% of mothers had some level of contact with the father of their child. This consisted mainly of those who were cohabiting or married (128) and others who had regular contact (343). Some mothers (158) described the contact as 'sporadic' and an additional small number of fathers (14) had a formal access arrangement in relation to their child.

**Chart 3**



A total of 147 young mothers reported that they had no contact with the father and in 120 cases the level of contact with the father was not known at the time of referral.

Almost one-third of mothers described the father of their child as their main support.

### **Antenatal Classes, Limerick**

The provision of Ante-Natal Classes for Teenagers/Young People remains a central area of work of the Limerick TPSP. These classes are run as a joint initiative with the TPSP and the Health Promotion Department of St. Munchin's Regional Maternity Hospital Limerick. The classes are facilitated by a midwife.

Where young people do not feel comfortable attending a Group/Course the midwife will meet them on a one-to-one basis and cover areas such as ante-natal care, labour and pain relief and caring for a newborn baby. Feedback from all young people who have attended these classes/one-to-one meetings has been extremely positive especially with regard to their own personal tour of the Labour Ward at St. Munchin's Regional Maternity Hospital.

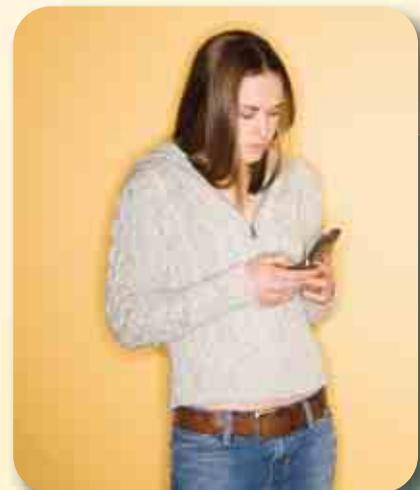
### **Antenatal Classes, Galway**

As part of the services of TPSP Galway an antenatal class specifically for Teen parents is held in The Gaf Youth Café run by the HSE West in Galway City. Individual sessions are arranged for those who do not wish to attend a group. Participants can bring a friend or partner if they wish. These sessions are informal. The aim is to prepare young parents for the birth, inform them of all options available to them and help prepare them for life with their newborn baby.

The uptake for the class increased in 2008. There are also a number of fathers attending with their partners. TPSP participated in a promotional DVD for The Gaf highlighting the specific work of the antenatal session.

### **The Baby Box, Wexford**

The importance of keeping records and information is something we all appreciate as we get older. Some young parents do not understand the importance of records for their babies. North Wexford TPSP has been working with young parents around the 'babybox/baby book' documenting development stages, memories, taking photos etc. This is also being done with fathers who are encouraged to have their own personal records of their child.



### HSE Achievements Awards 2007

In 2007 the Teen Parents Support Programme for Co. Louth won the Innovation category of HSE Dublin North East Better Service Awards. The Innovation Award is made for initiatives that are experimental and have the potential for significant learning with regard to improving services in a way that is consistent with the priorities of the HSE's Transformation Programme.

The Louth TPSP was established in 2004 and aims to respond in a supportive manner to teenage parents and provide an accessible, integrated service which connects to supportive networks within the community. As part of a variety of work carried out with parents on an individual and group level the Louth TPSP has facilitated a group of young fathers, provided infant massage, childcare supports for those returning to education and established an Educational Toy Scheme.

Speaking after winning the Award, Programme Leader, Joanne Murphy, said "The Programme has been a huge success in Co. Louth with excellent uptake of the service. The award is a great endorsement of all the hard work and dedication the team has given to teenage parents in Co. Louth" .

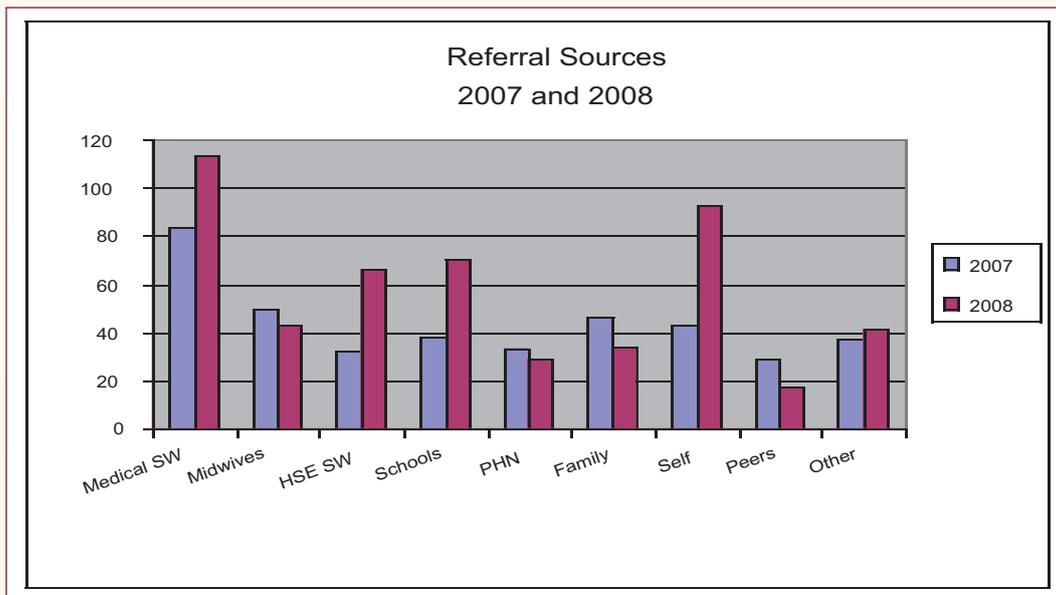


*Back row:  
Prof Brendan Drumm, HSE,  
Tina McEvoy, TPSP,  
Lucy Maguire, TPSP,  
Fiona Kearney, HSE and  
Larry Walsh, HSE.  
Front row: Ciara Finan, TPSP,  
Joanne Murphy TPSP and  
Rosemary O'Callaghan, HSE.*

### Referral Sources

Young parents are referred to the TPSP through a wide variety of agencies. This reflects the effectiveness of Programmes in building up relationships with local agencies which work with young people. As in earlier years, maternity services remain the biggest source of referrals accounting for 30% of the total with self-referrals in second place.

Chart 4



This is in keeping with the fact that most young mothers are referred while they are still pregnant. The large increase in self referrals (17% of the total) suggests that young people recognise the TPSP as an adolescent friendly and non judgemental service.

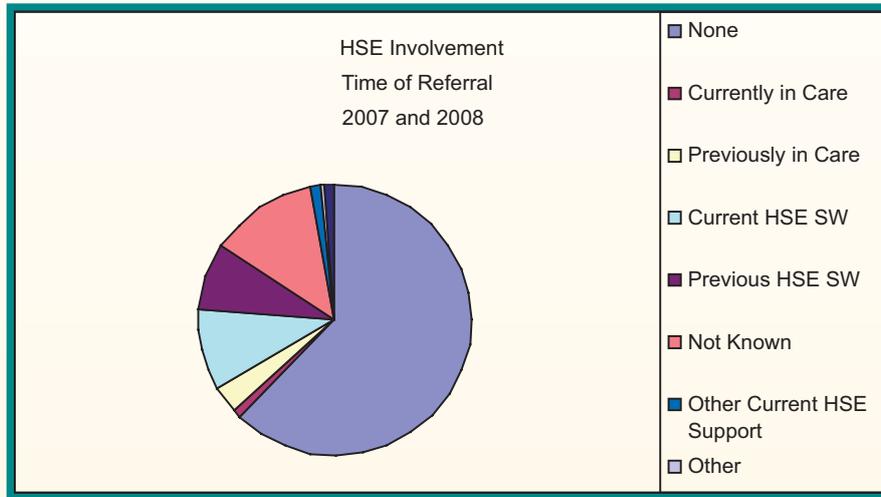
*“My social worker brought me to the TPSP when I was 3 months pregnant. They helped me plan what I’d need to do to get ready for the baby and visited me at home when she was born”*

Young Mother, Finglas

### HSE Involvement

Of the 999 referrals in 2007 and 2008, 378 (38%) were supported by HSE social workers or other HSE support services either at the time of referral or prior to that. See Chart 5, below. This was an increase of 5% on similar referrals in 2006. For example, a total of 13 young people were in care when referred and a further 28 had been in care previously. HSE social workers were involved with an additional 92 young people at the time of referral and had been involved with 80 others prior to referral.

**Chart 5**



The increased number of referrals with HSE Social Work or other HSE involvement combined with referrals from minority ethnic groups (including Irish Travellers) supports the reporting from Programmes as to the increasing complexity of the needs of the young parents referred to them.

*"She's a child, minding a child  
and I worry about her"*  
Grandmother, Cork

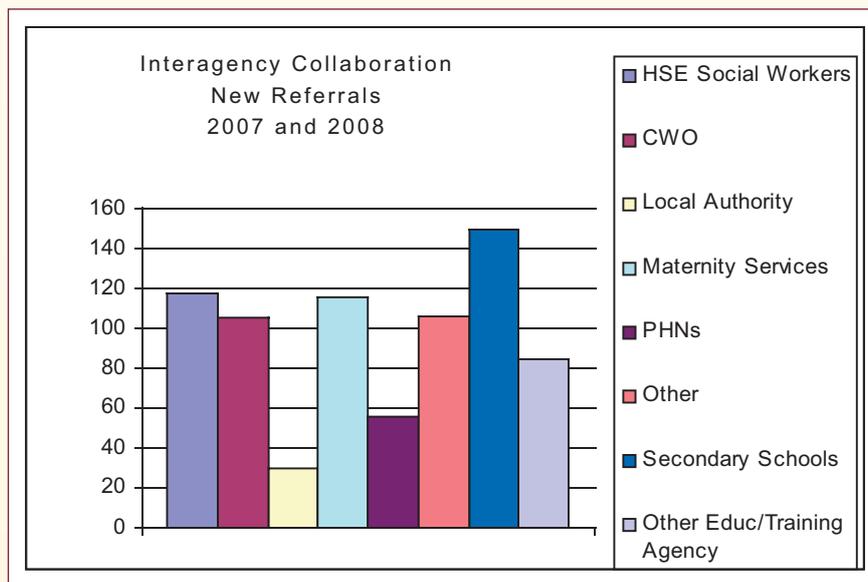


## Interagency Work in 2007 and 2008

One of the main aims of the TPSP is to “encourage existing services to work collaboratively to enhance the capacity of the community networks and local agencies to respond to the needs of this client group”.

Excluding contact at time of referral, TPSP staff made contact with at least one other service on behalf of 78% of those referred to them in 2007 and 2008. In many cases they made contact with several other services and sometimes took on a co-ordinating role among agencies.

**Chart 6**



*“[mother] is a very young teenager. For a child so young and coming from a chaotic family lifestyle to now be parenting her own child and still living in that environment is a situation of serious concern. The liaison that has occurred between your service, the Family Support Service, the public health nurse, the school and myself as her social worker has been invaluable in meeting the needs of [mother] and those of her baby”.*

HSE Social Worker, Finglas

TPSP staff had most contact with secondary schools, followed by HSE social workers and hospital maternity services. Chart 6, above, summarises the services and agencies contacted most frequently. Included in ‘Other’ are a wide variety of organisations and supports such as Community Mothers/ Parents, counselling services, crèches, disability services and youth services.

# Supports to New referrals in 2007 and 2008

## General Support

The TPSP aims to respond to all areas of need presented by young parents. This is achieved by supporting them directly or by referring them to other sources of support. Chart 7, below, shows that at the initial referral stage, almost 90% of pregnant or parenting teens received information about their social welfare entitlements. TPSP staff advocated directly with Community Welfare Officers and the Department of Social and Family Affairs on behalf of 257 (30%) of these young people. This suggests that a large proportion of young parents find it difficult to access these services and do not have the knowledge or confidence to do this for themselves.

Chart 7

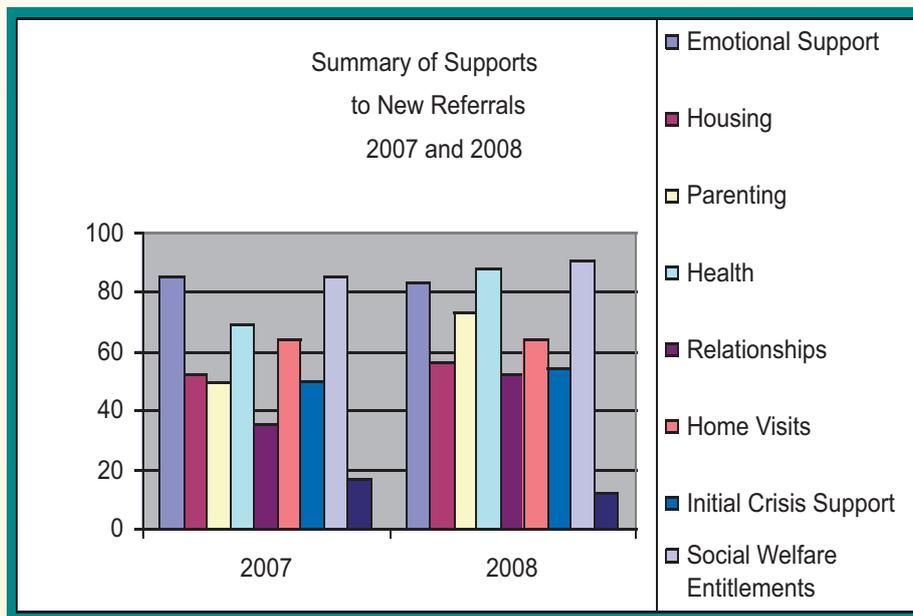
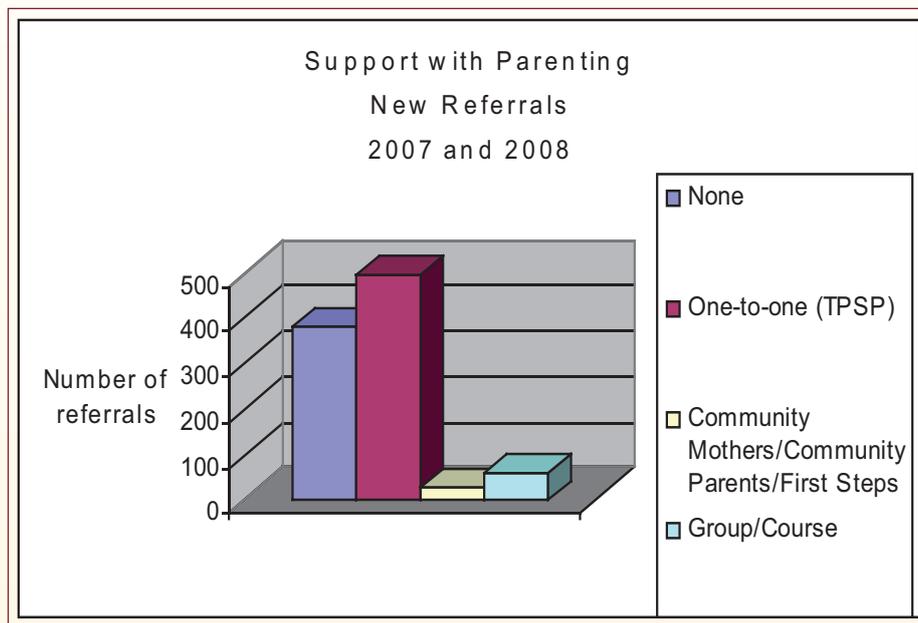


Chart 7 also shows that when young parents are still pregnant or have recently given birth they need a large amount of emotional support with health related issues, support to adjust to parenthood and to manage the changes in the relationships in their lives. While large numbers also received support with their education, training and childcare these appear to be less important at this stage than areas of income adequacy, personal well-being and effectiveness. Over one-fifth of young parents from minority ethnic groups received support with intercultural issues such as language, accessing services and the challenge of giving birth and parenting in a new culture.

## Support with Parenting

The TPSP plays an important role in the welfare and protection of young parents and their children. One of the main ways in which this is achieved is through supporting young parents to develop good parenting skills and to enjoy their role as parents. The role of fathers is also emphasised and young fathers are actively encouraged and supported to have contact with their children. Support with parenting is delivered on a one-to-one basis, through group activities and through referrals to other community based supports such as Community Mothers, Community Parents or First Steps.

**Chart 8**



In 2007 and 2008 combined, 60% of young parents, mothers and fathers, received support with parenting. Given that the majority of young parents were at the antenatal stage when they first engaged with the TPSP it is evident that TPSP staff start to orientate them towards parenthood and an understanding of child development as soon as possible. Most parenting support is delivered informally on a one-to-one basis. TPSP staff use a combination of existing parenting programmes as well as their own professional and personal experience. They may also adapt existing parenting programmes to better suit a teenage audience or to fill a gap e.g. support with responding to very young babies. In 2007 and 2008, 58 young parents participated in group activities and a further 27 were referred for one-to-one support through Community Mothers, Community Parents and First Steps.

### **Yummy Mummies, Limerick**

Staff of the Limerick TPSP were invited by staff of Our Lady of Lourdes Community Development Project, Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre and Limerick Youth Services to participate in the preparation, planning and consultation process involved in establishing a Young Mothers Support Group in the Ballinacurra/Weston area of Limerick City. This group was called The Yummy Mummies and was aimed at young mothers aged between 16 and 21 years living in the Ballinacurra/Weston Area. A group of eight young mothers met on a weekly basis over a ten-week period. The Limerick TPSP staff facilitated sessions on the needs of the young mothers who participated and also on issues which arose for them in relation to their children. These workshops allowed the young mothers to discuss their needs as parents as well as developing peer-support networks regarding childcare, parent support etc. Work has continued with a number of these young parents on a one-to-one basis regarding their welfare rights and entitlements, accommodation and other family issues.

### **Babywise Babycare Programme, Cork**

This is a one-to-one modular parenting programme devised by the Cork TPSP to provide information and guidance in the care of babies in the first 3 months of life. In addition to the informal one-to-one support which the TPSP provides, the TPSP staff in Cork and the young parents they work with identified that a more formal and structured approach would also be beneficial. TPSP staff researched a number of existing resources and consulted with other agencies involved in the area of childcare and development before devising its own Babywise Babycare Programme. Babywise is delivered by project staff who have a background in health education and health promotion as well as parenting experience and training. It focuses on day-to-day care of a baby, nutrition, establishing routines, safety in the home, child development, play and how to look after oneself and get support.

The Babywise Programme is offered during the antenatal stage where possible and continues for as long as the young parents require it.

### **Parenting Pack, Dublin West**

This Parenting Pack has been developed by staff in the Dublin West TPSP. This TPSP covers Drimnagh, Crumlin, Dublin 24 and parts of Dublin 8.

The Pack consists of material which supports parents to meet their babies' changing needs at each developmental stage from birth to 3 years. It is introduced to parents every 3 or 6 months to cover different developmental stages i.e. 0 - 3 months, 3 - 6 months etc. up to 30 - 36 months.

The Pack is delivered on a one-to-one basis. It is introduced to the parent by asking what skills s/he wants her/his children to develop for life e.g. good self esteem, language, social skills, concentration etc. This leads to a discussion about how these skills can be achieved. Then the parent is filmed for 5 minutes interacting with his/her child in either a play or structured situation. This film is played back and segments are paused to highlight to the parent the different ways in which s/he has supported the child's development. The parent is encouraged to continue to do this.

Each stage of the Pack has information sheets to go with it which the parent keeps together in a folder and builds on, as the child gets older.

The purpose of the pack is to give parents an understanding of their child's developmental stages and to equip them with some of the skills to meet the child's needs appropriately. The hope is that when parents tune into their children appropriately the bond between the parent and child strengthens. This healthy bonding, combined with the parents' skills, helps the children to develop their good life skills and reach their full potential.



### **Auto Parent Project, Donegal**

The auto parent's course was designed following the death of a teen mother and her baby girl in a car accident in Donegal. The young mothers in the Donegal TPSP identified a need for some information around car safety.

The aim of the Auto Parent Project was to provide the young parents with a good understanding of the importance of car safety and maintenance which would not only lead to safety on the roads but would also provide them with a certificate on car maintenance safety. The course was facilitated over 3 weeks. It included an evening in a local baby shop where the young mothers brought their own baby car seats along to get checked and also to check that they were strapping the seats in safely and correctly. This was followed by a DVD on car safety and a questions and answers session.

The group then attended a Basic Car Maintenance Course at the Northwest Training Centre in Letterkenny. The final week was a group discussion on their learning from the project. Sixteen young mums engaged in the course and found that it was beneficial and worthwhile.



### **Outreach Clinic, Moyross**

As part of the Limerick TPSP's interagency work with groups throughout Limerick City and County a series of meetings was held with staff of Moyross Youth Project regarding the needs of and supports available to young parents in the local area. It emerged that many of the young parents in the Moyross area were still living in the family home and did not feel comfortable having professionals call to visit them there. It was agreed to pilot a TPSP outreach service based in the Moyross Youth Project - The Bungalows beginning in January 2008. This outreach service is facilitated by the Project Worker of the Limerick TPSP and consists of a drop-in service run on a weekly basis. The outreach service is aimed at young parents living in the Moyross area who require assistance or information on a range of issues including welfare rights and entitlements, childcare, returning to education/training, accommodation etc. It is also a place for young parents to meet or where they can have "time out" away from their family and/or child.

### **Alternative Therapies Clinic, Ballyfermot**

In summer 2008, The Base Youth Facility in Ballyfermot offered young people a varied and fun summer programme. As part of this the Youth Health Programme (YHP) and the Ballyfermot TPSP introduced a 6 weeks Programme for young women aged 14 to 19 years old called "Girls' World". This Programme consisted of a series of sessions designed to deal with issues such as healthy eating, body image, sexual health, personal hygiene and effects of drugs and alcohol on skin and body. These issues were explored through alternative therapies and through inviting beauticians and other specialists who could demonstrate to the young women how to stay healthy and look beautiful while still taking care of themselves. The young people showed a particular interest in alternative therapies and, as a result, the YHP and the TPSP decided to open an Alternative Therapies Clinic for young people accessing the Base services.

The main objectives of the clinic are:

- To offer an alternative to young people who might be reluctant to access mainstream health services
- To respond in a creative way to the mental well being of young people e.g. reduce levels of stress, anxiety or pressure
- To offer young people the possibility of relaxing and taking care of their health in an enjoyable non threatening way
- To encourage those who come to the Alternative Therapies Clinic to also access mainstream health services
- To identify health related issues through the therapist's expertise.

The Alternative Therapies Clinic offers Reiki and various forms of massage including full body massage, Indian head massage, pregnancy massage, sports massage and baby massage.

This variety of treatments offers at least one form of treatment which interests both young mothers and young fathers.

The Alternative Therapies Clinic operates one evening per week to facilitate young people engaged with the Base Youth Work Programme and one morning per week to facilitate young parents engaged with the TPSP.



# Young Fathers 2007 and 2008



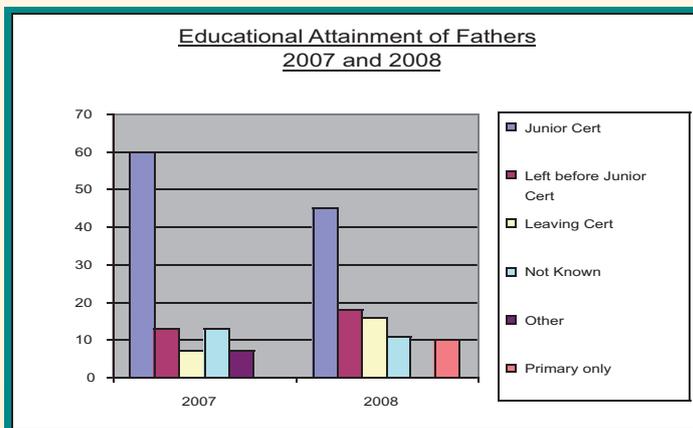
Of the 59 young fathers who engaged with the TPSP on their own in 2007/8, 46 (80%) were from an urban area. The majority of them (84%) were aged 17 years or over. Over one-third of them approached the TPSP directly for support while a further one-third made contact through peers or family members. This leaves one-third who were referred by professionals such as schools, training agencies, social work services and youth services. The referral sources for young fathers are almost the complete reverse to that for young mothers. All but 4 of the young fathers were Irish.

## Young Fathers: Education and Employment

With regard to education, training and employment the 59 young fathers who engaged with the TPSP in their own right present a very disadvantaged picture overall. Of the 36 who were no longer in education or training only 5 had completed their Leaving Certificate or its equivalent. This leaves 31 (52%) who are early school leavers compared to 32% of the young mothers referred to the TPSP in the same period (See Page 21). This compares very unfavourably with the 14% nationally who left school in 2007 without a Leaving Certificate<sup>1</sup>.

Of these 36 young fathers who had left school 23 of them (64%) were unemployed. This compares with a national unemployment rate of 9.2% among men in the fourth quarter of 2008<sup>2</sup>.

Chart 9



*"I knew nothing about looking after babies and stuff when my girlfriend got pregnant. The two of us went to the TPSP before the baby was born. We learned about holding the baby, bathing it and stuff. I did feel a bit of an eejit holding dolls but I got over it."*  
Young Father, Cork

<sup>1</sup>ESRI (2009). Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage. Dublin

<sup>2</sup>CSO (2008). Quarterly National Household Survey. Dublin

### Supports for Teen Fathers

The TPSP aims to support young fathers in the same holistic way that it supports young mothers. Charts 10 and 11, below, show that the 59 young fathers referred in 2007 and 2008 received support across the same range of issues as did the young mothers and the same range of agencies were contacted on their behalf.

Chart 10 shows that, for over 60% of the fathers, the birth of their child resulted in a crisis for them and they needed a large amount of emotional support to adjust to the implications of becoming a parent. Over 70% of fathers also received support with sorting out their social welfare entitlements which suggests that they may have difficulty negotiating the social welfare system without support.

**Chart 10**

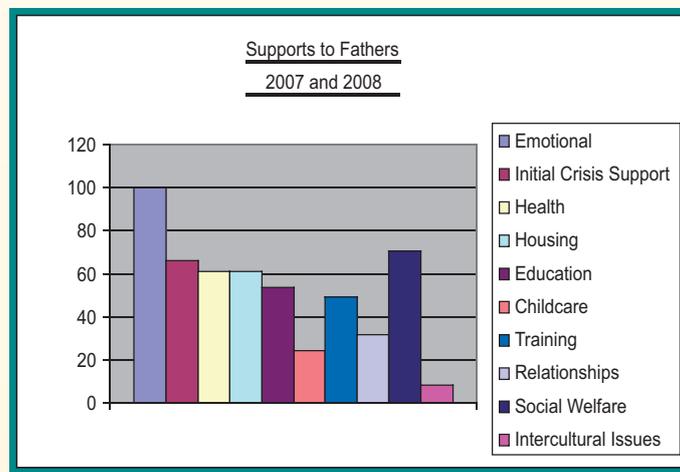
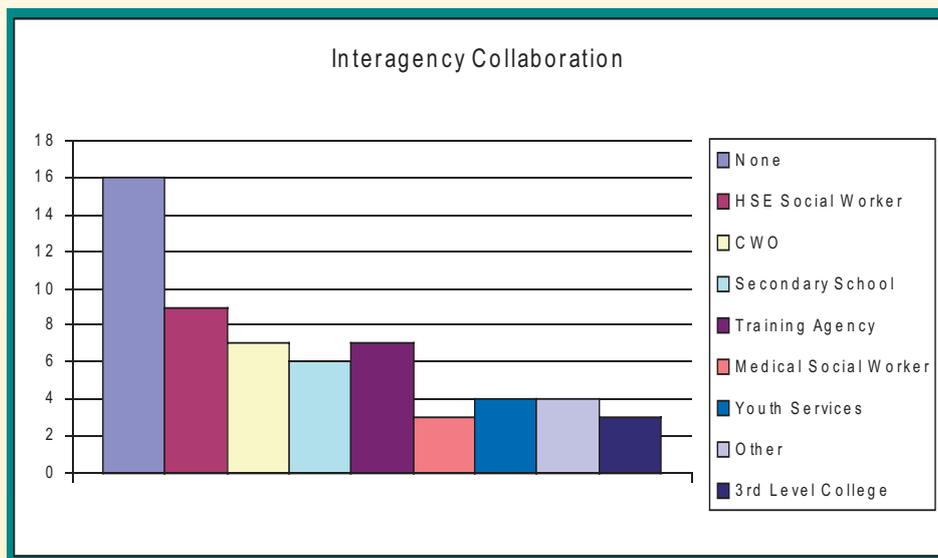


Chart 11 identifies that HSE Social Workers as the most frequently contacted agency on behalf of the young fathers. The reasons for this are not clear at the time of writing this report.

**Chart 11**



Data collected on young fathers who engage with the TPSP in their own right presents a picture of young men who are very disadvantaged from the point of view of education and employment. The fact that most of them approached the TPSP directly for support, or were referred through friends or family, suggests that they have very little contact with services which recognise them as fathers and recognise their need for support in this role.

The TPSP tries as far as possible to include young fathers in its services and group work. The commitment by TPSP staff to young fathers is reflected in the fact that the number of young fathers supported in their own right has increased from 13 in 2006 to 15 in 2007 and 44 in 2008.

### **Focus on Fathers, Louth**

In 2008 the Teen Parents Support Programme in Co. Louth received funding from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency to develop resource materials for those working with young fathers. A wide range of consultations with stakeholders, workers in the area and young fathers was undertaken to assess the needs of young fathers in Co. Louth. In co-operation with an outside independent company the Project has developed a resource pack for fathers aged 16–25 years of age which explores areas such as Parenting as a New Experience, Pregnancy and Birth, Coping with Stress and the Legal Situation of Fathers.

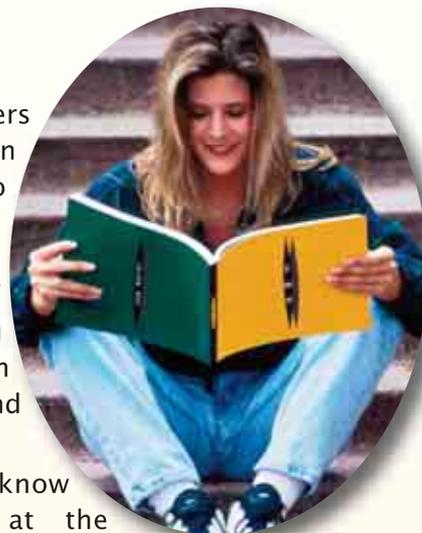
As a result of the Project, an Information Booklet outlining the positive impact fathers have on the development of their children together with helpful tips on Nutrition, Self-Esteem and Relationships will be available in antenatal clinics and health centres in Co. Louth. In addition a Key Findings Report will be disseminated to senior managers and key policy makers outlining the importance of including young fathers in all services.

*"I want my baby to be proud of me  
when she grows up so I want to be  
the best I can be"*

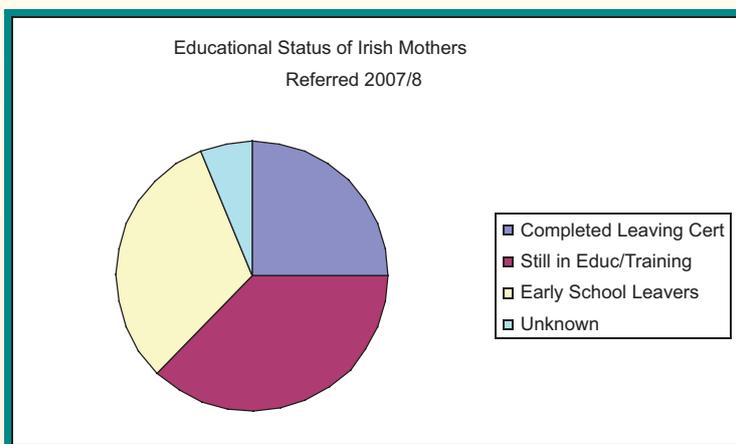
Young Father, Cork

# Teen Mothers and Education

This section looks at the educational situation of Irish mothers who engaged with the TPSP as this is the only group we can compare with national statistics. Out of 906 young mothers who engaged for the first time in 2007 and 2008 combined, 785 were Irish. This includes 20 young mothers who are Travellers. Of those 785 we know that at the time of referral 25% of mothers had completed their Leaving Certificate before, during or after the pregnancy. A further 292 (37%) were still in education or training. Of these, 101 (35%) of them were postnatal and almost all were in 2nd level schools or the equivalent.



**Chart 12**

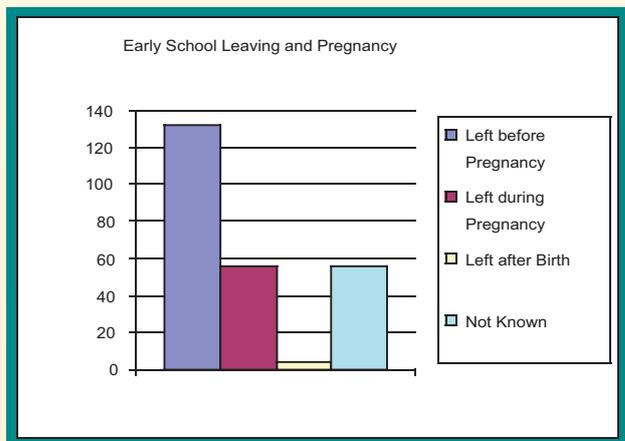


We know that at the point of referral 248 (32% of the total number referred) had left school without completing their Leaving Certificate and that at least 59 of them (21% of the early school leavers) had no formal certification of any kind. This rate of early school leaving among young Irish mothers is more than twice the national average where

86% of school leavers completed the Leaving Certificate or equivalent in 2007<sup>3</sup>.

Of the 248 early school leavers we know that at least 132 (53%) of them had left school prior to their pregnancy and at least 56 (23%) of them dropped out of school during the pregnancy. This contrasts with only 4 mothers who dropped out of school following the birth of their children. This suggests that the danger point for early school leaving is during the pregnancy and would seem to indicate that if young women can be retained

**Chart 13**



in school while pregnant there is a strong likelihood that they will return to complete their education.

<sup>3</sup>ESRI (2009) Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage Dublin

### School Completion Programme

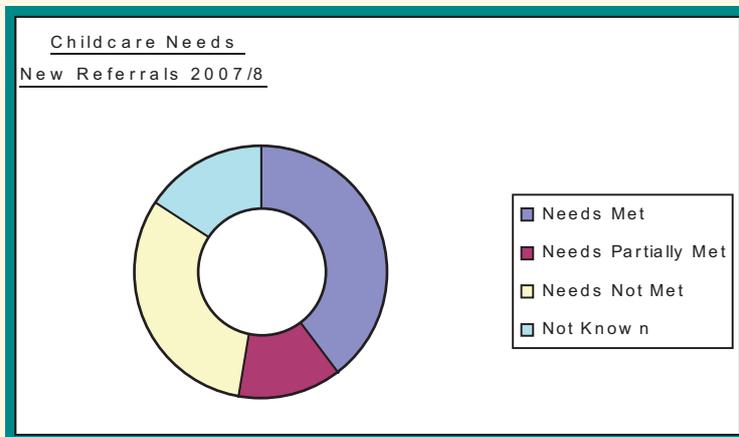
For the academic year 2007/8 the TPSP received €280,236 from the School Completion Programme of the Department of Education and Science. The three most recently established TPSPs – North Wexford, Ballyfermot and Finglas – did not receive any School Completion Funding during this period. The €280,236 was divided among the remaining 8 TPSPs with each TPSP receiving between €20,000 and €60,000. This money was used to support young mothers with education-related expenses including childcare. During 2007 and 2008, 73 new referrals received support from the School Completion Fund i.e. 72% of those who had their babies and were still in education at the time of referral. This is in addition to financial assistance given to young mothers referred in previous years and who continued with their education. This funding is indispensable in supporting young parents to remain in or return to education.

### Education and Childcare

At the time of referral in 2007 and 2008 combined, 210 young mothers were described as needing childcare. This means that they had their babies and wished to remain in or return to education, training and employment.

#### Chart 14

Of these 210 young mothers, 40% had their childcare needs met and 13% had their childcare needs partially met. Almost one-third (31%) did not have childcare and were unable to continue in education/training or employment. For 16% of mothers the extent to which their childcare needs were met was unknown.

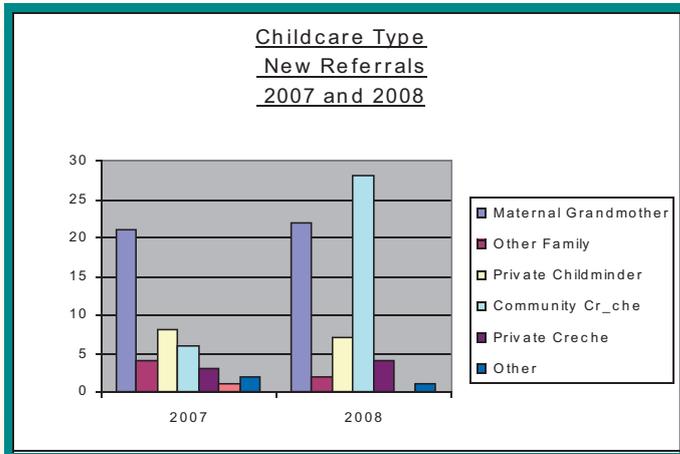


A comparison of 2007 and 2008 shows that, overall, access to affordable childcare deteriorated in 2008 with 41% not having the childcare they required compared to 27% in 2007.

*“There is no way I could have gone back to school without the grant from the TPSP. I had to send my daughter to a crèche which cost me €180 per week”.*

Young Mother, Cork

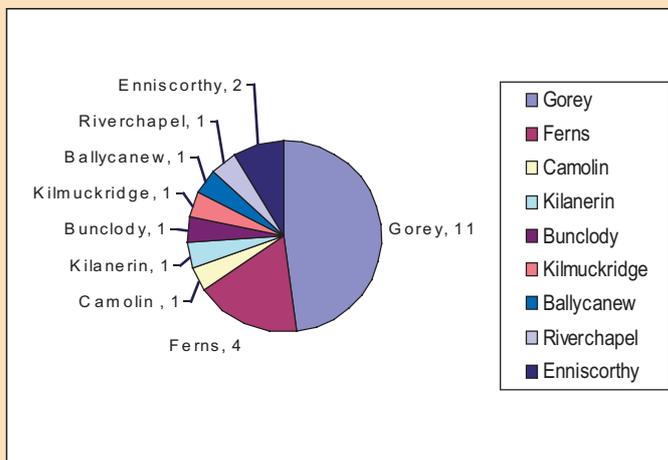
**Chart 15**



Taking 2007 and 2008 together Chart 15 shows that, where a young mother has childcare, in 40% of cases this childcare is provided by the maternal grandmother. In 2008, however, there was a large increase in access to community based crèches accounting for 43% of childcare places in that year. Almost all of these community crèche places are in Dublin and the increase in 2008 can be

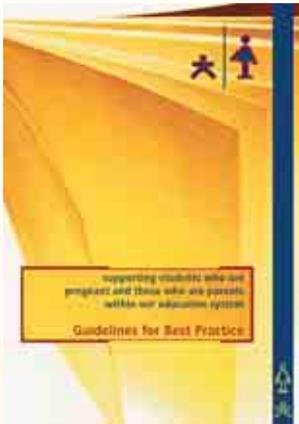
accounted for by the availability of community crèches in the areas of Dublin where the new TPSPs are located.

The experience of TPSP staff is that young mothers prefer having their children minded in their own family home particularly when they are still babies. The use of community crèches in 2008 shows that young parents are also open to other alternatives where these are available.



Nineteen young mothers from North Wexford wanted to return to education in 2008 but because of the lack of affordable childcare were unable to do so. Their difficulties were compounded by the fact that the North Wexford TPSP did not receive any funding from the School Completion Programme.





**Guidelines for Best Practice:** *supporting students who are pregnant and those who are parenting within our education system.*

This publication was developed by the Limerick Teen Parents Support Programme in co-operation with schools and other interested parties in Limerick city and county. Its purpose is to enable schools/centres of education to put in place supports aimed at ensuring that students who become pregnant or who are parents are supported to continue in education. The Guidelines deal with how to respond to a disclosure of pregnancy by a student, how to support students during pregnancy (including a student care plan) and how to support

students who are parents within the education system.

The Guidelines apply to young fathers as well as mothers and were launched locally in Limerick in 2006. In 2007 the National Co-ordinator funded the reprinting of the Guidelines and their distribution to all second level schools in the country.

### **Moving On, Carlow**

In 2007/8 fourteen mothers from the Carlow TPSP successfully secured placement on the Moving On Programme. This 10-month course has been running for ten years in St. Catherine's Community Services Centre in Carlow. The programme enables young mothers aged 16 to 25 years to complete their education up to Leaving Certificate or equivalent.

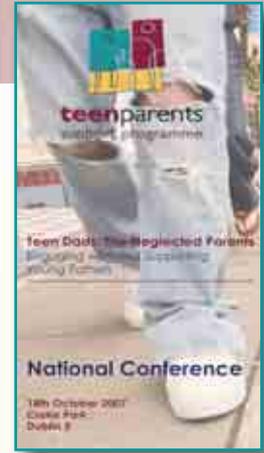
The topics covered on the course include child development and play; parenting; communication skills; computer skills; career guidance; job seeking skills; work experience; fitness and health; first aid; mathematics; crafts and other modules to suit individual needs. Following this course the teen parents are well placed to pursue further education or employment.

Since 2006, Carlow TPSP and Moving On have worked closely together to achieve the best possible outcomes for young teen mothers. This includes TPSP staff delivering parenting and sexual health modules to the Moving On Programme.

*"The support that the TPSP gives around parenting skills and sourcing childcare reinforces and supports the work of the Local Employment Services as we aim to help our clients progress into education, training and employment and fills a vital role in young people being able to access progression options"*

LESN Co-ordinator, Finglas.

# First National TPSP Conference



The first National Conference of the TPSP, entitled *Teen Dads - the Neglected Parents* took place in October 2007. The theme of the conference was a response to the enormous obstacles many teen dads face in participating in the lives of their children. The Conference was targeted at workers who have contact with young parents – mothers or fathers – such as schools, health services, family, support services, youth groups, parent groups, childcare providers, etc.

## **The aims of the Conference were:**

- To raise awareness of the need to support the involvement of young fathers in the lives of their children
- To provide an opportunity to reflect on one's own attitudes and practice in relation to young fathers
- To provide models of engaging with and supporting young fathers.

Opening the Conference, Minister for Children, Brendan Smith, T.D. spoke of the effectiveness of the TPSP and the interagency model in supporting families.

Other speakers included Fergus Hogan, Co-ordinator, Centre for Social and Family Research, Waterford Institute of Technology; Francis Chance, Assistant National

Director of Children's Services, Barnardos; Julie McGinty and Sharon White from the Young Fathers Project, Derry and David Simpson, Trainer and Co-ordinator of "Promoting Fatherhood" . Two young fathers, Finn Murray and Séan Benson, spoke of their personal experience of fatherhood.

## **Common themes for Conference speakers included:**

- Teenage fathers as key supports in their children's lives when supported by teen parent support services and by the father's wider family and networks
- Key moments when men are open to engaging with support services are early in the pregnancy and at the time of the birth of their child
- National and international research shows that fathers' involvement in their children's lives is crucial to children's development and behaviours
- We need to father-proof existing supports rather than designing supports especially for fathers
- The crucial role of maternal grandmothers as gatekeepers in allowing young fathers to have access to their child
- Fathers in both parts of Ireland tend to be invisible as they are absent from official statistics
- Fathers want to be involved in their children's lives, but may not have the skills or supports they need to overcome the obstacles to their involvement
- The Social Welfare system can act as a disincentive to family formation – e.g. One-Parent Family Payment is paid to lone parents living separately to the child's father
- Difficulties for services in finding and in engaging with fathers
- Supports from services and their families have enabled fathers to become involved and to negotiate that involvement with mothers and grandparents
- Fathers say that attitudes of support services' staff are more important than whether staff are male or female
- The need to address the law and systems which exclude fathers from having rights to their child.



*David Simpson, Fergus Hogan and Francis Chance at the TPSP National Conference 2007*

### **16th International Conference on Health Promoting Hospitals and Health Services**

The Galway TPSP presented at the above conference which was organised by the WHO and partner organisations in Berlin in 2008 and attended by delegates from throughout Europe, the US, Australia and Asia. The Galway TPSP is based in the Social Work Department of University Hospital Galway and Aileen Davies, Project Leader, gave a presentation on its philosophy, model, work activities and outcomes. Among the outcomes from the TPSP Aileen emphasised:

- A general feeling of happiness with parenthood
- Improved participation in education and
- Increased access to and understanding of services.

Aileen also delivered a poster presentation on behalf of Claire Thynne whose PhD thesis explored the meaning of late disclosure of pregnancy from the 'insider' perspective of the women who experience it. Claire's study was based on a sample of women from University Hospital Galway. Claire found that late disclosure was more common for women from a rural background and women who feared a negative parental reaction. Comparing a sample who had delayed disclosure of pregnancy with a normative sample she found that birth weights were lower in those who had delayed disclosure.

# Evaluation of Dublin North Teen Parents Support Programme

The Dublin North TPSP, is based in Doras Buí, a parents alone resource centre in Coolock. This TPSP was launched in 2004 and presented the Evaluation Report of its pilot phase in 2007. The Evaluation, which was conducted by Independent Consultant Grainne Healy, was a formative evaluation whereby project data was gathered at regular intervals. Both stakeholders and staff received feedback on a regular basis so that any required changes to the development of the model of support offered to the young parents could be made on an ongoing basis.



*“All stakeholders, especially participants, found that the staff were hugely responsible for the successful development and delivery of an effective model of support for teen parents in the catchment area of the Northside Partnership in North Dublin”*

Specifically, during the period of the Evaluation 88 teen mothers, 14 young fathers and 29 grandparents actively engaged with the Programme. All of these individuals received tailored support, information and advice to assist them in the adjustment to becoming parents or grandparents.

The Programme, which was funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency during its pilot phase, also used group activities to achieve its objectives. These group-based activities included:

- Residential sexual health training programmes
- Personal development and confidence building programmes
- Courses in stress management and anger management
- Programmes for young fathers
- Workshops for grandparents
- Family outings and opportunities for peer support
- The delivery of preventative programmes to Youthreach and local secondary schools.

#### **The Evaluation Report made the following recommendations:**

- Expand the membership of the TPSP Local Advisory Group
- Lobby for a home school liaison person for each school in its catchment area to ensure an appropriate schools/community link person for each school to strengthen the schools link to the project.
- Continue the TPSP involvement in RSE schools programmes locally, supported by financial input from appropriate education and sex education bodies
- Include more residential learning opportunities for participants on the Programme
- Ensure that adequate and realistic financial provision is made for childcare supports on any future TPSP.

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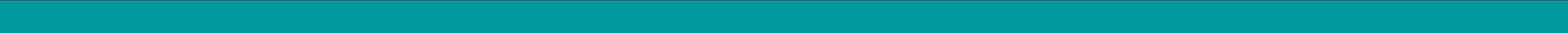
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The Teen Parents Support Programme is funded by the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education & Science



Féidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

