



teenparents
support programme

Annual Report

2006

Foreword

The Teen Parents Support Initiative was established in 1999. Following its successful evaluation it became the Teen Parents Support Programme one of whose aims is to ensure that all pregnant and parenting teenagers in the country have access to a Teen Parents Support Programme. Since its establishment the number of Programmes has increased to eight sites in 2006 i.e. Carlow, Cork, Donegal, Dublin (2), Galway, Limerick and Louth. This expansion has been due to a number of factors and people. Of major importance is the commitment by the social partners in *Towards 2016 the Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015* to the strengthening of the Teen Parents Support Programme. The commitment of both finance and support from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency enabled two of the eight Programmes to be established and also enabled the Teen Parents Support Programme to employ a full time National Co-ordinator. The role of the National Co-ordinator has been critical in the development of the TPSP. The National Co-ordinator is based in Treoir, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children.

In 2006 at national level the Teen Parents Support Programme continued to build on the already established relationships with the Health Service Executive, the Department of Health and Children, the Office of the Minister for Children, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. At a local level the Teen Parents Support Programme staff continued to build relationships with a wide range of local services both voluntary and statutory.

I would like to express my thanks to all who served on the National Advisory Committee of the Teen Parents Support Programme for their commitment to teen parents and for their advice and expertise. I would also like to express my thanks to the staff of the Teen Parents Support Programmes throughout the country. The evaluation of the Teen Parents Support Initiative commented specifically on the qualities of staff at a local level as a key element in the success of the Initiative. During 2006 Margaret Acton resigned as Project Leader of the Dublin West TPSP which is based in Barnardos. Margaret had worked with the Teen Parents Support Programme from the beginning. I would like to acknowledge her dedication to the young parents in her area and her support for new developing Programmes. Finally, I would like to thank Margaret Morris, National Co-ordinator as well as Margot Doherty and Bella Maher of Treoir for their commitment and work.

2006 has been a very successful year for the Teen Parents Support Programme. One of its most important developments was the Government support which ringfenced one million euro in the December 2006 Budget. It is anticipated that in 2007 further Programmes will be established with this money and the relationship between the Health Service Executive and the National Advisory Committee will be formalised.

Rosemary Grant

Chairperson

National Advisory Committee.

| | |
|--|----|
| Overview of the Teen Parents Support Programme | 1 |
| Objectives of the Teen Parents Support Programme | 3 |
| Supports offered by the Teen Parents Support Programme | 3 |
| Teen Births 2006 | 4 |
| Main Developments in 2006 | 6 |
| Referrals to TPSP in 2006 | 7 |
| Summary of Supports to New Referrals 2006 | 11 |
| Profile of Young Fathers | 12 |
| Teen Parents and Education | 14 |
| Policy Development / Submissions | 16 |
| Evaluation of the Louth Teen Parents Support Programme | 18 |
| National Advisory Committee | 19 |
| TPSP Staff 2006 | 20 |

Overview of the Teen Parents Support Programme

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 skill, 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 8 Programmes throughout the country and a post of National Co-ordinator.

In 2006 the TPSP was overseen by a National Steering Group with overall responsibility for the development of the TPSP, a National Advisory Committee which provides a forum for information sharing and interagency collaboration and a National Co-ordinator.

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.

In 2006 the TPSP received its core funding, which amounted to €1,138,687, from the Health Service Executive and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

Additional funding for educational supports was received from the Department of Education and Science.

Quotes used in this Report are taken from the young parents who participated in the evaluation of the Louth TPSP 2006.

Objectives of the Teen Parents Support Programme

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME ARE TO:

- Identify the needs of the targeted young parents, the services available to them and any gaps in these services
- 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
- 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.

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/Parents, Home Start or First Steps Programmes
- Encouragement to retain their own social structures and attend peer support groups organised by the TPSP or by other agencies
- Individual antenatal support including preparation for birth
- Antenatal Support Groups (provided on site by some TPSPs)
- 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/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
- Referral to appropriate health services such as GPs, PHNs, psychiatric, paediatric and child development services
- Information and support regarding legal issues
- Information/referral and advocacy in relation to schools, colleges, the Moving On Young Mothers in Employment Projects, FÁS, Youthreach and other training bodies
- General information/support with health related issues including contraception.

The TPSP is about unravelling the whole difficult period from pregnancy to parenthood and dealing with health – medical and emotional support, guidance, advice and signposting to other agencies.

Evaluation Report of the Louth TPSP 2006

Teen Births 2006

BIRTHS TO WOMEN UNDER 20 YEARS OF AGE

In line with the trends in recent years, the number of births to women under 20 years of age declined slightly in 2006.

Nevertheless, teen parenthood is a source of concern because of the poor life outcomes generally associated with it.

| 1990–2006 | | |
|--|---------------|-----------------|
| No. of births and fertility rates* for women under 20 years of age | | |
| Year | No. of births | Fertility rates |
| 1990 | 2639 | 16.7 |
| 1995 | 2482 | 15.1 |
| 2000 | 3135 | 19.3 |
| 2001 | 3095 | 19.9 |
| 2002 | 2978 | 19.4 |
| 2003 | 2803 | 19.0 |
| 2004 | 2560 | 17.4 |
| 2005 | 2427 | 16.8 |
| 2006 | 2362 | 16.6 |

*Fertility rate is the number of live births per 1000 women aged between 15 and 20 years.
Source: CSO Vital Statistics.

| 2000–2006 | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| 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 |

Since 2000 there has been a decrease in the number of births in all age groups under 20 years of age.

In 2006, the majority (76%) of teenagers giving birth were aged 18 and 19 years while 2% of teen births were to mothers aged 15 years or under.

Source: CSO Vital Statistics.

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS UNDER 20 YEARS OF AGE BY HSE AREA

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

Source : CSO Vital Statistics

Main Developments in 2006

New Programmes

Three additional Teen Parents Support Programmes were established in 2006.

The Carlow/Kilkenny TPSP is managed by and based in St. Catherine's Community Services, Carlow and covers all of counties Carlow and Kilkenny.

The Cork TPSP which is managed by St. Anne's Day Nursery is based at 24 Dunbar Street, Cork and covers all of Cork city and county.

The Donegal TPSP is managed by Foróige. It covers the Letterkenny, Finn Valley and Inishowen areas of Donegal and has a base in both Letterkenny and Ballybofey.

All of these new Programmes are funded by the Health Service Executive.

This brings to 8 the number of TPSPs funded in 2006.

First Report

The First Report of the TPSP (2000–2005) was launched by Brian Lenihan T.D. Minister for Children on May 22nd 2006. This was the first document recording the progress of the TPSP since the Evaluation Report of the 3 initial pilot TPSI projects in 2002.

Transfer from Dept of Health and Children to the HSE

During 2006, in line with ongoing reforms in the health service, responsibility for the TPSP was transferred from the Department of Health and Children to the Health Service Executive.

Government Commitment to TPSP

The Government has confirmed its commitment to the TPSP in ***Towards 2016 the Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*** which includes the priority action of 'strengthening services under the Teen Parents Support Initiative, which supports teen parents during pregnancy until their child reaches two years of age' ***The Government Discussion Paper: Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents*** acknowledges that 'young lone parents do represent a particularly vulnerable group' and recommends that 'teenage parents... receive particular supports at an early stage'.

Budget 2007

Budget 2007 allocated an additional €1m to the TPSP. This money will be used to:

- mainstream the Louth and Doras Buí (Coolock) TPSPs and the post of National Co-ordinator all of which were funded in 2006 by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency
- pick up funding shortfalls in the 3 Programmes, above, which started in 2006 as well as Limerick, Coolock and Dublin West Programmes
- provide start-up funding in 2007 for additional TPSP programmes or posts.

Referrals to TPSP in 2006

In 2006, 412 young parents contacted the TPSP for the first time. This represents 18% of all teen births in Ireland in 2006 and brings to 1807 the total number of young parents, their children and families who 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 2004 and 2005.

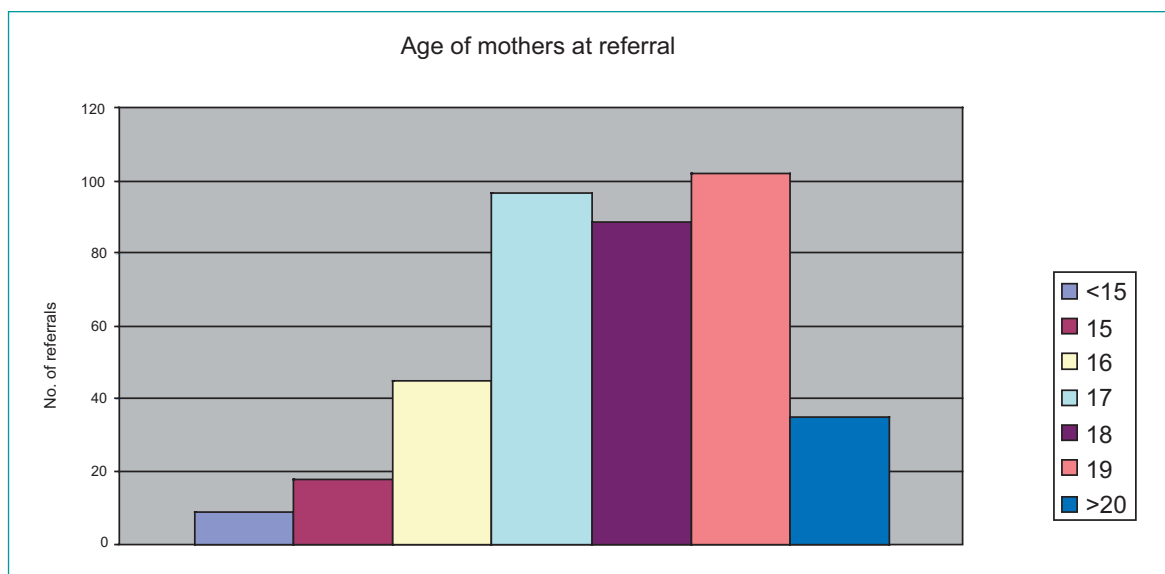
Of the 412 new referrals, 283 were from an urban background and 129 from a rural background. In most cases the young woman was referred as the main person requiring support and, where appropriate, the TPSP provided secondary support to her family and partner. In 2006, 368 young women were referred as the primary client. In an additional 23 cases the mother and maternal grandmother were equally supported as a unit, 8 young couples presented together for support and 13 young fathers were supported in their own right separate from the mother. In total, 399 young mothers received support either on their own, together with their own mother or with their partner.

Age of young mothers

With regard to age, 9 young mothers were under 15 years of age, 18 were 15 years of age, 45 were aged 16 years, 97 were aged 17 years, 89 were aged 18 years and 137 were aged 19 years and older. Just over half of the referrals (55%) were at the antenatal stage. For 93% this was their first child.

Younger mothers are more likely to be referred to the TPSP than those in their later teens. Young mothers aged 15 years or under accounted for 7% of referrals compared to 2% of births in this age range nationally.

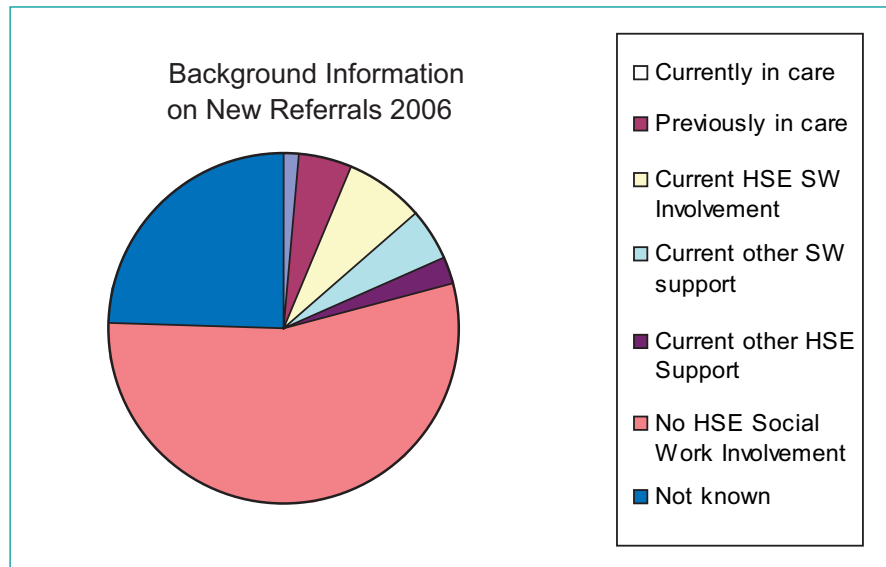
CHART 1



Background of referrals

Of the 412 new referrals data as to their place of origin was collected on 384 of them. Of those, 68 (18%) were non Irish nationals which is approximately twice the figure for 2005. Young Brazilian parents supported by the Galway TPSP accounted for almost 20% of the young migrants. In total, the TPSP supported young parents with 15 different

Chart 2

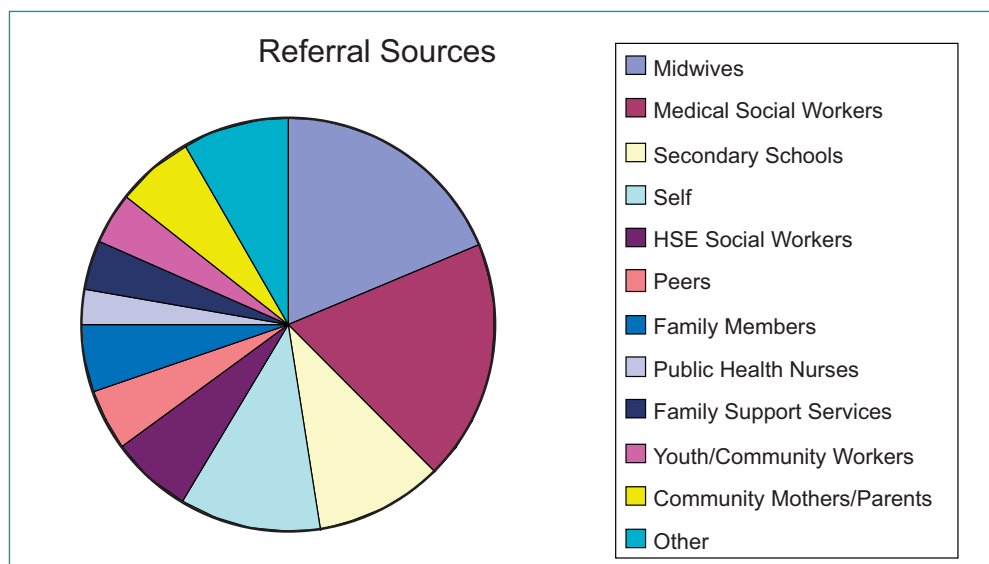


nationalities. Of the 322 Irish referrals on whom background details were known 106 (33%) were supported by HSE social workers or other HSE support services either at the time of referral or prior to that. For example, 5 young people were in care when referred and a further 19 had been in care previously. HSE social workers were involved with an additional 40 young people at the time of referral and had been involved with 19 others prior to referral. A further 16 young parents from the Traveller community were included among the Irish referrals. Overall, the TPSPs report an increased level of need among their young parents which has implications for resources and staffing levels.

Referral Sources

Young parents are referred to the TPSP through a wide variety of agencies.

Chart 3

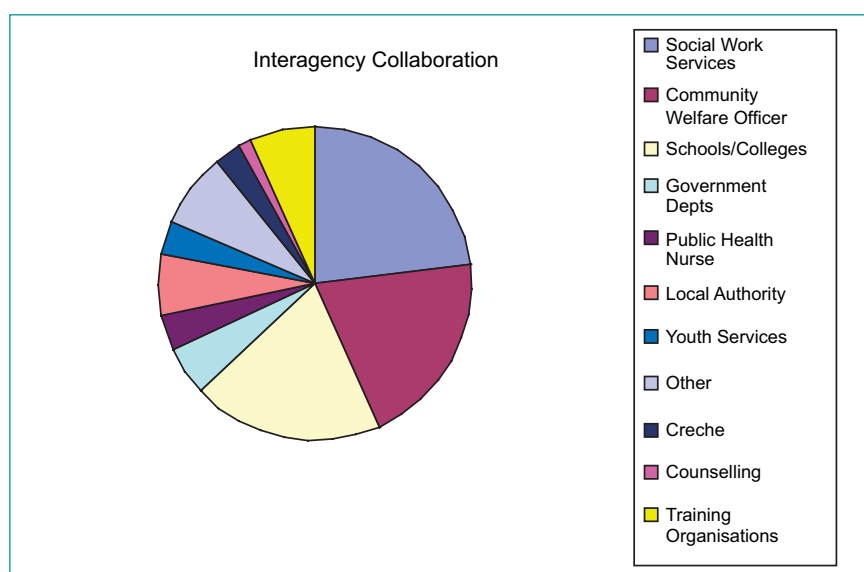


This reflects the effectiveness of the Local Advisory Groups and the importance which the Programmes place on building up relationships with all the local agencies which work with young people. In 2006 the majority of referrals came from maternity hospitals which is in keeping with the fact that most young mothers are referred while they are still pregnant or shortly after the birth of their child.

Interagency Collaboration

One of the main objectives 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 73% of those referred to them in 2006. In many cases they made contact with several other services and sometimes took on a co-ordinating role among agencies. Below is a summary of the services and agencies contacted most frequently. Social Work Services, the most frequently contacted category, refers to all social work services – medical, HSE and social workers in agencies such as the local authorities.

CHART 4



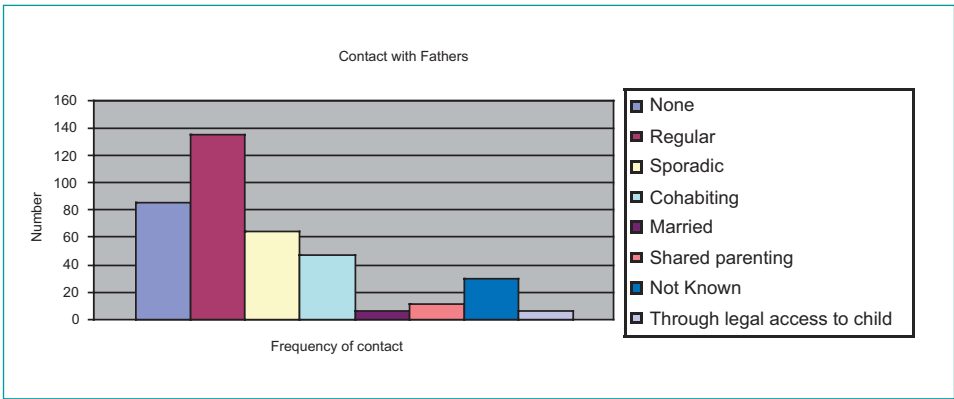
There's stuff that (my Project Worker) doesn't do but she'll put you through to someone else who does, like when I needed one-to-one antenatal classes and that she got it all organised for me.

Teen Parent (18), Pregnant

Contact with Fathers

Approximately 20% of the young mothers referred in 2006 described the father of their child as her main source of support and a further 10% described the father and her own mother, combined, as her main support. An additional 10% of mothers described “both families” as supportive. Taken together these categories account for most of the ‘regular contact’ in Chart 5 below.

CHART 5



Regular contact includes couples who were married, cohabiting or who had a joint parenting arrangement although they lived separately.

The (Project Worker) would come out to meet (my girlfriend) and she'd help me as well. It's hard for young fathers too 'cos you can feel trapped or not know what to do with the child and it can be tough adjusting. There can be a lot more arguments too because of lack of sleep and that and it's a lot of stress. Without (the Project Worker) we'd have been lost and alone.

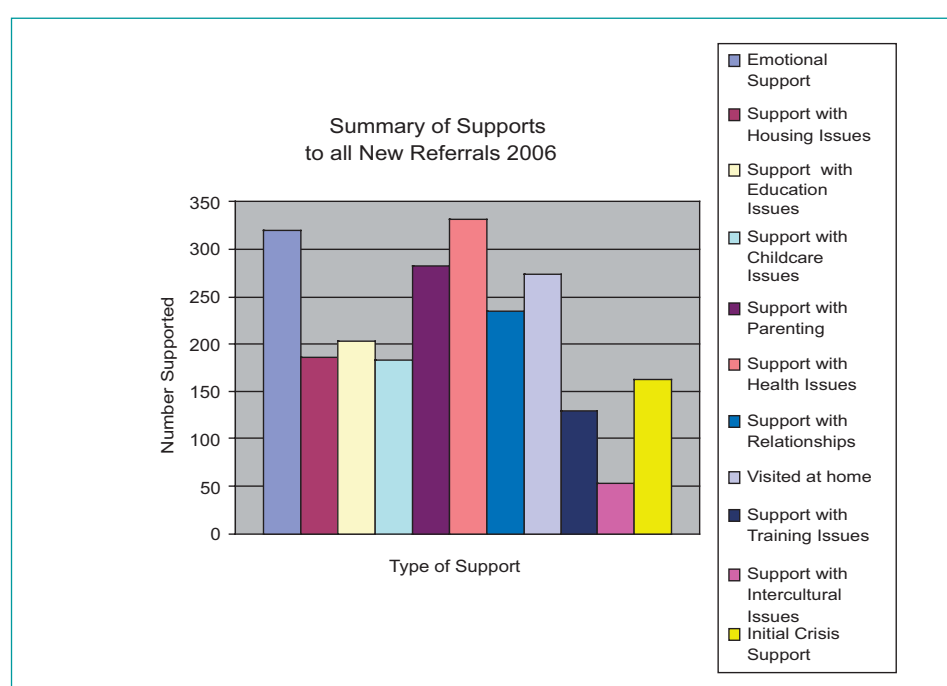
Young Father (23), Children aged 3 years and 9 months.

Summary of Supports to New Referrals 2006

It's the way they'll help you with anything and everything you need-they never leave you stuck. I had finished school in 5th year before I got pregnant and I only went back because of (child). (The TPSP) gave me help with the crèche and helped me with schoolbooks and grinds which helped me a lot because I wouldn't have been able to afford to go back.....And they talk to you a lot about your problems, like my boyfriend has been in jail since (child) was born, and I live with me mam and we were fighting a lot and I wanted to move out and that but it's alright now. They helped me to cope and got me an education and that will forward me in life.

Teen Parent (18), child aged 2 years.

CHART 6



As Chart 6 above shows the TPSP aims to respond, either directly or by referring them to other sources of support, to all areas of need presented by the young parents.

The Chart also shows that at the initial referral stage, when most of the young parents are still pregnant or have recently given birth, what is most needed is support with health related issues; emotional support (including support to adjust to their new situation); 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 personal well being and effectiveness. We can also see that a very high proportion of the young migrant parents needed support in areas such as language, accessing services and the challenge of parenting in a new culture.

*(The TPSP) helped me be prepared to have a baby and get parenting skills.
It helped me feel not so alone or isolated.*

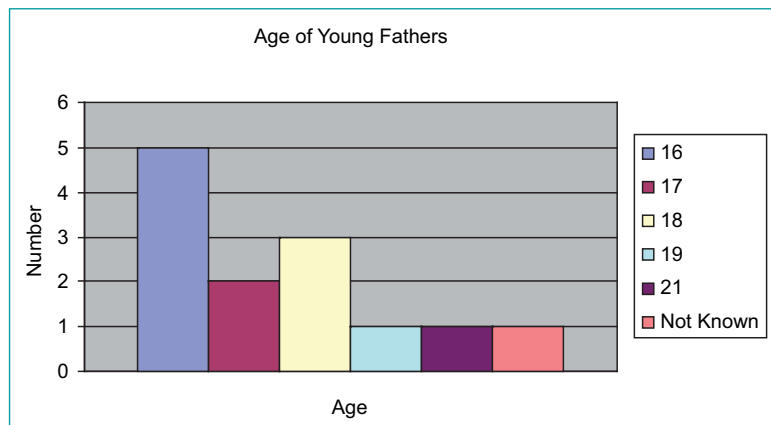
Teen Parent, (18) Child aged 1

Profile of Young Fathers

Age of young fathers

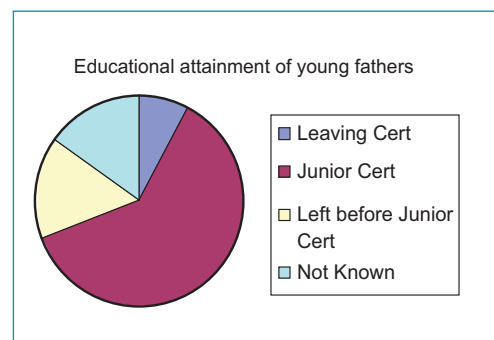
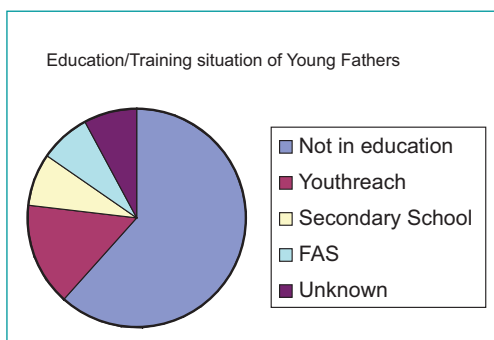
The TPSP tries as far as possible to include young fathers in its services and group work. Data was collected, however, only on those fathers who were supported separately from mothers. Of the 13 young men in question, 5 were aged 16 years, 2 were aged 17 years and 6 were aged 18 and over. This, overall, is a much younger age profile than that of the young mothers. All but 2 of the young men were Irish, 1 was English and the nationality of the other was unknown.

CHART 7



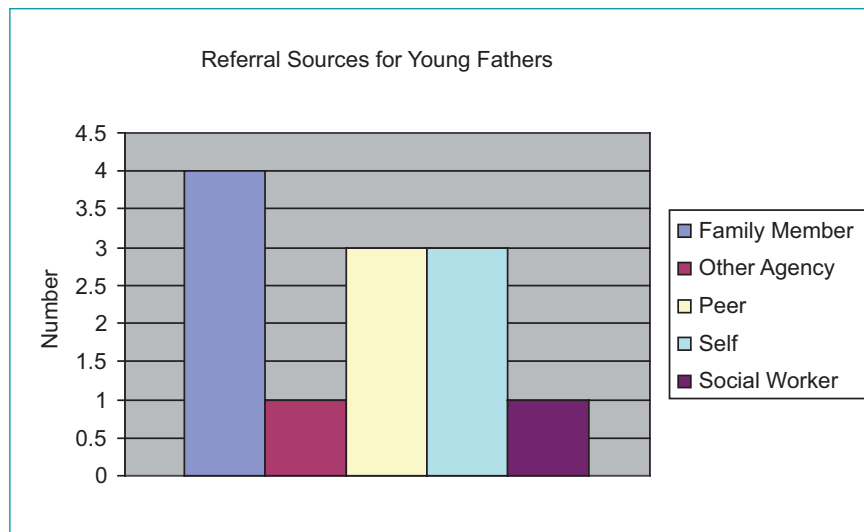
From an education/training point of view the young fathers were also more educationally disadvantaged than the young mothers in general. Only 1 of the 13 had completed his Leaving Certificate, 8 had completed their Junior Cert, 2 had left secondary school before completing their Junior Cert and the educational attainment of the remaining 2 was unknown. One of the young fathers was still in secondary school while 3 were in FÁS or Youthreach. Of the remaining 9 young men, 2 were in full-time employment and 1 was in part-time employment giving an unemployment rate in this group of over 60 % despite the fact that they did not have the full-time care of their child.

CHARTS 8 AND 9



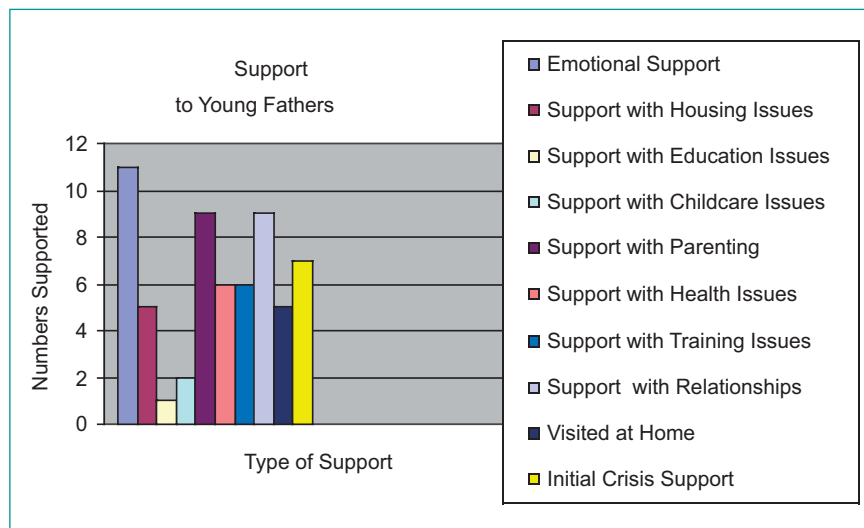
The referral sources for young fathers are almost the complete reverse to that of young mothers. In almost all cases they were put in touch with the TPSP through family, friends or through their own initiative.

CHART 10



The young fathers received support across the same range of issues as did the young mothers although none of them required any support with intercultural issues. What stands out are their needs in relation to themselves as fathers i.e. emotional support, support with relationships and support in acquiring good parenting skills. For all of the young men who received support with relationships, for example, this involved the relationship with the mother of their child and /or members of her family.

CHART 11



This profile of a small sample of young fathers presents a picture of young men who are very disadvantaged from the point of view of education and employment. They appear to have very little contact with services which recognise them as fathers and recognise their need for support in this role. Finding a way of engaging with and supporting young fathers is also a challenge for the TPSP.

Teen Parents and Education

In 2006 the TPSP maintained contact with the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Science and staff of the School Completion Programme to ensure a continued 'joined up' approach between the TPSP and the Department. For the academic year 2006/7 the School Completion programme provided €325,330 to the TPSP which is used to support participants with education related expenses. During 2006, 85 new referrals were in secondary school and 39 of those received support from the School Completion Fund in addition to the young mothers from previous years who also received ongoing support. This collaboration is indispensable in supporting young parents to remain in or return to education.

During 2006 the TPSP met the Home Tuition Section of the Department regarding the administration of the Home Tuition Scheme for pregnant or parenting students as well as the Education Welfare Board to examine possible co-operation between the TPSP and Education Welfare Officers. There was also contact with the Schools Inspectorate regarding the dissemination of the *Guidelines for Best Practice in Supporting Pregnant or Parenting Students* developed by the Limerick TPSP.

Educational Profile of New Referrals

Of the 412 New Referrals in 2006, 132 were still in education or training; 136 had left school before they became pregnant and a further 55 had left school either during the pregnancy or shortly after the birth of their babies. The educational situation of the remainder was unknown or unclear.

Of the 136 who had left before their pregnancy, 71% had not completed their Leaving Cert confirming the well established connection between early school leaving and teen pregnancy.

CHART 12

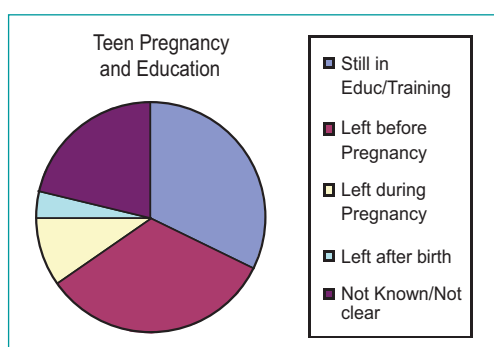
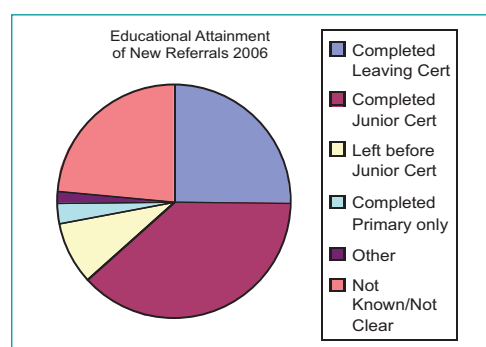


CHART 13



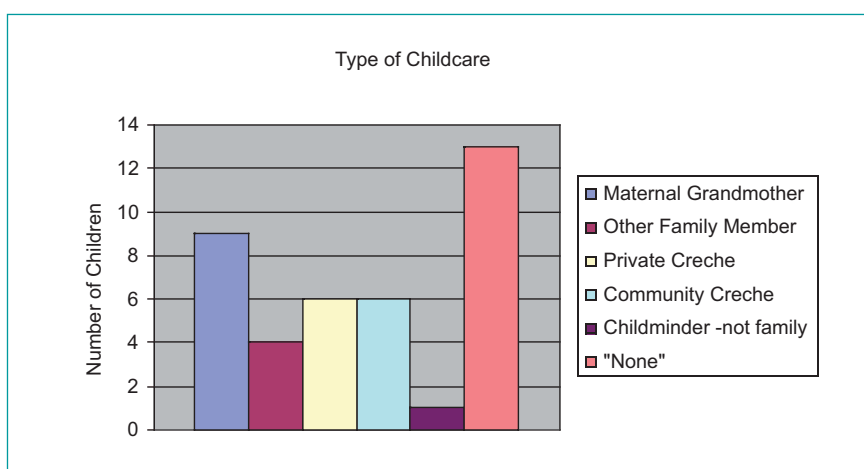
With regard to educational attainment, (104) 25% of referrals had completed their Leaving Certificate and of them 33 were in Third Level Education, including PLCs. Almost 40% had Junior Certificate as their highest educational attainment and a further 9% either did not transfer to secondary school or left secondary school without completing their Junior Certificate.

Childcare

At the time of referral 147 of the young women already had their babies. Out of this number, 39 were still in education or training. Almost half of these (46%) had their childcare needs met and over one-third (36%) were described as “not needing” childcare. The remainder either did not have their childcare needs met, had their childcare needs partially met or their childcare needs were unknown.

One-third of the children were minded either by the maternal grandmother or another family member. Almost one-third were minded in a crèche, divided evenly between private and community crèches. A further one-third were described as not having any childcare despite their being in full-time education. Almost all of this latter group are the same as the group described as ‘not needing’ childcare and all but one of them were still living in the family home. This suggests that their children were being minded in the family home without the label ‘childcare’ being attached to the service they were receiving from other family members. It also suggests that approximately two-thirds of the children of teen parents are minded in the family home. This is partly because the experience of TPSP staff is that young mothers prefer to have their children minded by a family member and partly because of the lack of sufficient support for childcare in general.

CHART 14



When I found out about the TPSP I was desperate for help, (my baby) was five or six months old and the Guidance Counsellor at my school told me about the Programme. Only for the Programme I wouldn't be where I am now. There were plenty of times I was going to give up and pack it all in ...I got great support and they're there to talk about all your problems not just education.

Teen Parent (21) Child aged 2.5 years

Policy Development/ Submissions

Education Policy

Part of the work of the TPSP is to support young parents, particularly young mothers, to complete their education which is at risk of being interrupted by their taking on the role of parents. In response to barriers identified by TPSP staff a sub group of the National Advisory Committee was formed and put together the following recommendations so that the young parent who is the primary care giver can complete her/his education.

Second Level Education

- In the absence of universal state funded childcare such as exists in some EU countries, there is a need to create a fund to finance childcare for school-age parents. A model such as exists in Northern Ireland where all mothers in secondary education are entitled to receive the full cost of childcare could be considered
- Where parenting teens are under the compulsory school leaving age it is imperative that they receive childcare support immediately
- The Department of Education and Science should promote guidelines for best practice in schools in relation to students who are pregnant or parenting
- The administration of the Home Tuition Scheme for pregnant or parenting teen mothers needs to be reviewed and consideration given to widening its scope.

Third Level Education

- A childcare allowance (such as the Childcare Grant in the UK and Northern Ireland) should be introduced for young parents attending training and educational courses up to degree level
- Parents in receipt of OFP should be assessed as a family in their own right for the Higher Education Grant regardless of their age or place of residence
- Where young parents are forced to leave home midweek to go to third level education it should be possible for them to leave their child in the family home without it affecting their OFP.

Second Chance Education/Training

- The qualifying conditions for 'second chance' schemes should be reviewed in light of the needs of teenage and other young parents
- The qualifying conditions and income support arrangements for 'second chance' schemes should be streamlined and harmonised so that, for young parents in receipt of OFP, income support and eligibility for secondary benefits are the same regardless of what scheme or training course is chosen
- A childcare grant (such as the Care to Learn or New Deal Lone Parents Schemes in the UK and Northern Ireland) should be introduced for young parents in vocational based courses or in second level courses outside mainstream secondary schools.

Government Discussion Paper: Supporting Lone Parents

This Discussion Paper makes radical proposals for changes in the welfare code as it currently affects lone parents in receipt of One Parent Family Payment. In April 2006 Minister Brennan hosted a Forum in Farmleigh House where organisations representing lone parents were given an opportunity to respond to the *Government Discussion Paper*. In response the TPSP stated that it welcomed some aspects of the Discussion Paper, particularly the proposed removal of the ban on cohabitation. Much of the work of the TPSP, such as the effort to keep young mothers in education, is in keeping with the aspirations of the Discussion Paper. However, to reduce early school leaving in this population requires a more targeted childcare funding than is currently available.

This was followed by an individual TPSP meeting in the Department of an Taoiseach with the Senior Officials Group charged with implementing the non-income aspects of the Discussion Paper. This meeting also focused on the need for childcare support and on the need to make a TPSP accessible to every teen parent. .

Submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Child Protection

This Committee was established in response to the legislative difficulties presented by 'C.C' case in May 2006.

The TPSP submission stated that its primary concern is that children be fully protected from sexual abuse and manipulation and believes that this should be the main focus of the Oireachtas Committee. It is also our concern that legislation on underage sexual activity be relevant to the lives of young people and that the fear of criminalisation be removed where there is no child protection issue. The TPSP called on the Oireachtas Committee to endeavour to find a mechanism in law which gives full protection from sexual assault and abuse to young people without criminalising consensual sexual activity among young people. With regard to the unequal treatment of males and females in the current legislation covering this area the TPSP believes that the issue of criminality for either party should only arise where the sexual activity is not consensual.

Pre-Budget Submission

The TPSP Pre-Budget Submission was included in the Treoir Submission and concentrated on the removal of barriers and disincentives to remaining in or returning to education as outlined in the TPSP Education policy document above.

Evaluation of Louth Teen Parents Support Programme

The Louth TPSP was launched in 2004 and presented the Evaluation Report of its pilot phase in 2006.

The evaluation which was conducted by QE5 Ltd. found that *“the Programme has created a new focus on, and awareness of, issues affecting teen parents throughout the community, voluntary and statutory serviced framework through integrating and adding value to existing services”*.

Specifically, over a two and a half year period

- Over 200 teenage girls, their partners and families, have engaged with the Programme
- All of these individuals have received tailored support, information and advice to assist them in the transition into parenthood
- Over a quarter of teen parents had received financial support towards childcare, grinds and other costs associated with their return/continuation in education
- Almost a fifth of teen parents have received further financial support in moving house and in purchasing educational toys for their children
- A number of group based activities/programmes have been developed and delivered, including
 - Cook it Programmes
 - DKIT Support Group
 - Infant Massage
 - Summer Outings Programme
- Ten young fathers have received support and skills development through the Young Fathers Programme
- The TPSP has enabled uptake of existing community, voluntary and statutory support services in the county
- Consultation and research specific to the sexual health and parenting needs of teenagers has been carried out and published
- Training and development programmes and activities have been carried out throughout Louth
- The Louth Sexual Health Committee has been established.

Among the recommendations were the following:

The recruitment of additional staff to support the levels of referrals coming to the Louth TPSP

The Development of a more suitable operational base (s)

Increased group work and work with young fathers

The need for a long term commitment to funding

The need for the Programme to be rolled out regionally particularly to Co. Meath.

I couldn't have enough praise for the two (Louth TPSP Project Workers). They gave me support as well as (my daughter) and I didn't feel so alone It was great for the moral support it gave me and someone for me to talk to when it got too much.

Grandmother, Daughter pregnant at 15

National Advisory Committee

Role and Membership

The role of the National Advisory Committee is to:

- provide a forum for information gathering and interagency working in the interest of teen parents
- advise the National Steering Group and make recommendations in relation to the Teen Parents Support Programme

Membership of the Committee is drawn from key Government Departments, funders, employing organisations and local Programmes.

Chairperson Rosemary Grant, Principal Medical Social Worker,
Coombe Women' s Hospital

Members Margaret Acton, Project Leader, TPSP Dublin West *
Francis Chance, Assistant Director, Children' s Services, Barnardos
Ivan Cooper, Administration Manager, Crisis Pregnancy Agency*
Phyllis Crowe, Project Leader, TPSP Limerick
Aileen Davies, Project Leader, TPSP, Galway
Margot Doherty, Assistant CEO, Treoir
Olga Garland, Child Care Manager, HSE, South Western Region
Mary Hargaden, Child Care Manager, HSE Northern Region
Joyce Hammond, Executive Officer, Department of Health and Children
Fiona Kearney, Manager, Family Support and Child Welfare Services, HSE North Eastern Region
Heber McMahon, Assistant Principal, Family Affairs Unit, Dept. of Social and Family Affairs
Mary McMahon, Senior Social Worker, University College Hospital, Galway
Margaret Morris, National Co-ordinator TPSP
Joanne Murphy, Project Leader, TPSP, Louth
Catriona O' Brien, Assistant Principal, Social Inclusion Section, Department of Education and Science
Suzanne Phelan, Child Care Manager, HSE Northern Region
Chris Sheridan, Principal Community Worker, HSE Midwest Region
Kieran Smyth, Assistant Principal, Childcare Policy Unit, Department of Health and Children
Anita Whelan, Project Leader, TPSP Dublin North

* Resigned during the year

During 2006 there were 2 meetings of the National Advisory Committee.

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