



teenparents
support programme

treoir

Annual Report

2023

National Advisory Committee Chairperson Foreword

As Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee I am delighted to welcome all the readers to the Teen Parent Support Programme's Annual Report 2023.

As I reflect on the progress of the Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP) throughout the year I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the wonderful teams working in the eleven projects who are dedicated to supporting the young mothers and fathers attending their service for support as they embark on their journey as parents.

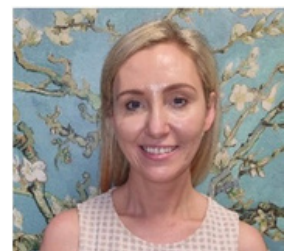
This report provides a summary of the work of these eleven TPSP's in supporting 556 parents who accessed the service during the year. The majority of referrals during the year were for young people during their first pregnancy and the majority of referrals continue to come from maternity hospitals. The projects continue to acknowledge and support the important role of young fathers also. While the report highlights the continuing reduction in teen births in Ireland, it also highlights the increasing complexity of needs of the young people the projects are supporting. Some of these issues are the current housing crisis and increasing risk of homelessness, domestic violence and coercive control in relationships, barriers to accessing to education and childcare, and mental health.

This Annual Report was compiled by, Samantha Dunne, National Manager of the TPSP. The national manager role involves maintaining meaningful contact with all projects, providing support to staff, networking, advocating and raising issues at a national level to highlight strengths and areas for development amongst the projects. This role also involves having a direct role in policy and service development at national level and this has been highlighted through her active role on the National Advisory Committee. One of the original aims of the TPSP was that every pregnant or parenting teenager would be able to access a TPSP in their area. The report speaks to one of our greatest achievements of 2023; the ongoing expansion of the TPSP's to support young parents up to the age of 24 and the provision of the service in more areas around the country. I would like to thank Samantha Dunne for her continued support to all the projects throughout the year and her role in supporting the expansion and development of the service.

These developments highlight the effective role of the National Manager, the TPSP projects and the National Advisory Committee in their constant advocacy for need for this service to be accessible throughout the country.

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

Laura Harrington,
Chairperson
National Advisory Committee
Teen Parents Support programme



Treoir, which was founded in 1976, is a national organisation that consists of a network of services dedicated to supporting unmarried parents and their children. Initially, the organisation's goal was to provide essential support and information to unmarried mothers and the professionals assisting them during a time when unmarried women faced significant discrimination and social stigma, and their children were labeled as "illegitimate" since they were not born to married couples.

In the nearly five decades since its establishment, Treoir has observed notable transformations in Irish society. For example, the percentage of births outside of marriage has risen from 3.8% in 1976 to approximately 41% in 2023. Family structures have evolved, and legislative changes have been made to accommodate these shifts, such as the Children and Family Relationships Act 2016, Children First Act, and Marriage Equality, and advancements in abortion rights. However, further efforts are required to ensure fairness for all family units, not just those based on marriage. Despite these advancements, the financial circumstances and support for lone parents remains an area of concern, particularly for economically and educationally disadvantaged lone

mothers, and especially young parents who may have left school before completing secondary education, which can lead to higher poverty rates amongst this cohort. Treoir is dedicated to advocating for policy change and removing obstacles to address these challenges. Our organisation has consistently supported young mothers, as shown by our management of the Teen Parents Support Programme. This programme recognises the importance of assisting young mothers facing the risk of discontinuing their education due to pregnancy and the subsequent impact on their career opportunities. It also emphasises the significance of encouraging young fathers to play a more active role in their child's life.

Furthermore, Treoir oversees the National Kinship Care (Ireland) program, which involves full-time care of children by relatives such as grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, or family friends. This form of care may be necessary due to various circumstances such as parental substance abuse, the death of a parent, abandonment, illness, or parental imprisonment. Kinship care refers to family-based care provided within the child's extended family or among close family friends, whether formal or informal.

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

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

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01

Overview of the Teen Parents Support programme

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

The Teen Parents Support programme (TPSP), established in 1999, provides preventative support services for families headed by young parents in Ireland. In 2023 the programme consisted of 12 projects across 11 counties (11 TPSPs and 1 YPSP), funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union, Tusla and the Health Services Executive (HSE), and coordinated by Treoir. It targets parents aged 19 or under, and supports them until their children turn 2, with planned expansion to include young parents aged 20-24 within the Young Parents Support Programme (YPSP).

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

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

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



Locations of TPSP Projects

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wexford TPSP - Wexford - County - Barnardos, Enniscorthy

Dublin TPSP

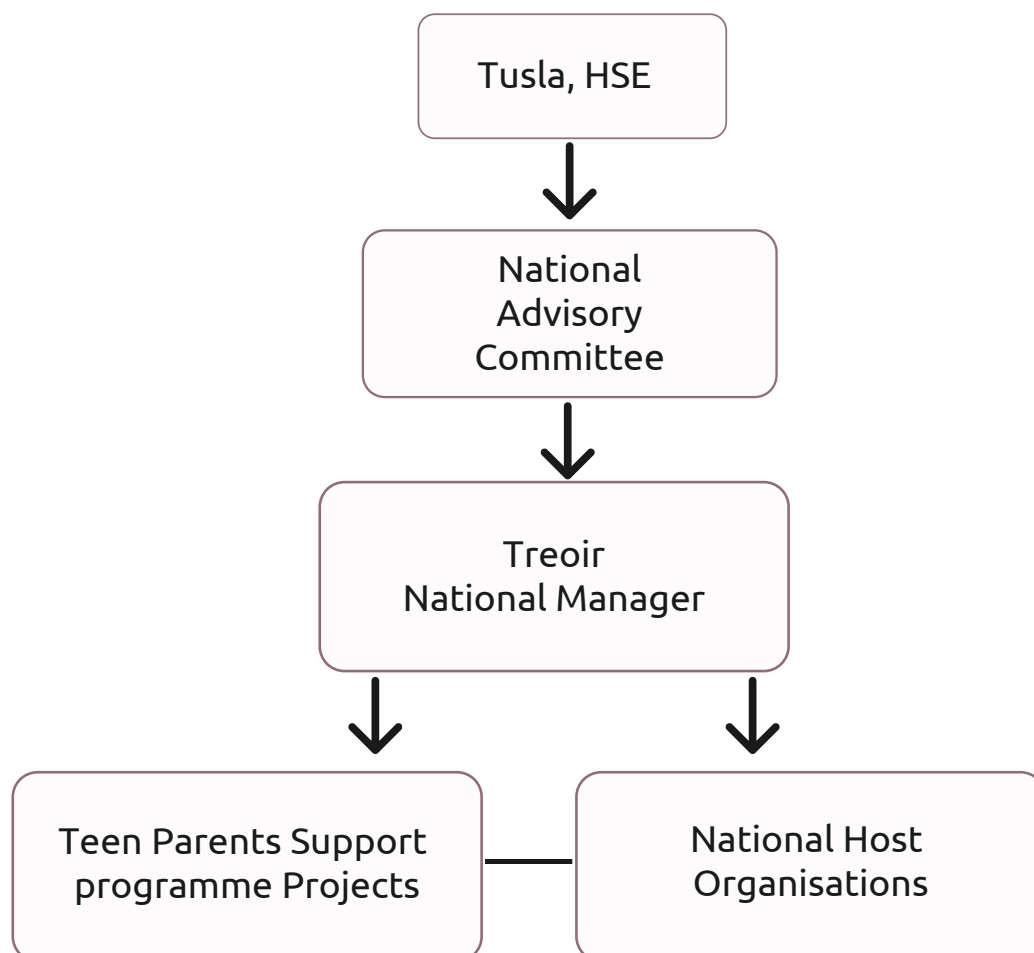
- Ballyfermot/Bluebell/Inchicore - Familibase, Ballyfermot
- Dublin 24, 12, and parts of 6 - Barnardos, Clondalkin
- Dublin 5, 13, 17 and parts of 3 and 9 - Doras Buí, Coolock
- Finglas TPSP, Barnardos, Finglas

Kildare YPSP - Foroige, Rosconnell, Newbridge, Kildare



National Structure of the TPSP

The TPSP National Framework consists of funding authorities, the Government of Ireland and the European Union, Tusla and the HSE, a National Advisory Committee (NAC), the National Manager whom is hosted by Treoir, Host Organisations, and local projects. There exists and structure which facilitates information exchange and collaboration by way of National meetings convened by the National Manager. These meetings are held with the NAC, host organisations members, and all local projects. The National Manager oversees the overall structure, provides support to projects where appropriate, engages funders, and carries out policy development work. On a local scale, the structure of a TPSP Project consists of a host organisation, project manager, and project workers. Most projects are hosted by local community services.



02

National Advisory Committee

The Teen Parents Support Programme National Advisory Committee has been overseeing the development of the national TPSP since 1999. Laura Harrington, appointed by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in 2021, currently chairs the committee. The NAC supports the national TPSP manager, providing guidance on various aspects of its growth, especially focusing on expanding the project nationwide. Through collaborative efforts with statutory and non-statutory agencies, the National Advisory Committee (NAC) assists young parents and their children in all aspects which impacts their wellbeing. Representatives from different government departments offer prompt advice on policy matters, with the TPSP National manager facilitating the committee's operations and coordinating with the chairperson. In 2023, the NAC convened as a group biannually, and the National Manager had multiple meetings with the Chairperson.

Chairperson

Laura Harrington, Head Medical Social Worker, National Maternity Hospital

Members

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

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

Nuala Colton/Janet Colgan - Tusla Education Support Services

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

Aongus McGrane - Dept. of Higher and Further Education, Innovation, Research and Science

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

Damien Peelo - Treoir CEO

Samantha Dunne - Treoir – TPSP National Manager

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

Youth Participants: Emily Salmon & Katie Davis

03

Supports and Interventions

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



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

04

Teen births 2014 - 2023

Year	Number of births*	Fertility rates**
2014	1253	9.3
2015	1187	8.7
2016	1098	7.8
2017	1041	6.9
2018	980	6.3
2019	864	5.5
2020	841	5.3
2021	699	4.3
2022	798	4.9
2023	705	3.5

TABLE 1 BIRTH AND FERTILITY RATES TO MOTHERS UNDER NINETEEN YEARS, 2014 - 2023

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

Sources: CSO Vital Statistics and Yearly Summaries 2014 to 2023

*Number of births that were registered in 2023

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

05 Expansion of the Teen Parents Support programme

Treoir's Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 places a high priority on expanding the TPSP nationwide to ensure all young parents can benefit from it. The TPSP NAC and National TPSP manager have collaborated on this expansion in recent years. Additional development of the TPSP will be made possible through funding from the European Social Fund Plus program, jointly supported by the Government of Ireland and the European Union. This expansion is in response to the growing recognition of the increasing need for specialised support for young parents. The ultimate aim is to provide local access to a TPSP for every young parent in the Republic of Ireland.



The extension of the "Young Parents Support Programme" (YPSP), overseen by the National TPSP Manager, DCEDIY's Parenting Policy Unit, and Tusla's Partnership, Prevention, and Family Support Unit, is focused on engaging young parents up to twenty-four years old and broadening its coverage to various counties. This collaborative effort involves working with local and regional PPFS managers and existing TPSP projects. The expansion has received positive responses from Treoir, DCEDIY, Tusla, and current TPSP projects, all collaborating to ensure that the YPSP is easily accessible to young parents in local communities.

In 2023, Tusla's PPFS National office and Treoir coordinated the selection process for the first greenfield site as part of the ESF+ YPSP expansion. Foroige Youth Development Service in Newbridge will host the Kildare YPSP, which started accepting referrals in 2024.

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

06

Management of the TPSP

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

The National TPSP Manager

In 2023, the National Manager provided continuous support for TPSP projects and collaborated with professionals assisting young parents. This support included engaging in various working groups, events, Departmental committees, networks, and coalitions focusing on young parents and their children.

Management Activities:

- Regularly communicating with TPSP projects and organising meetings involving project staff, management, and the TPSP National Advisory Committee.
- Keeping TPSP staff informed about governmental policy and legislative changes affecting young parents, encompassing education, training, childcare, and social welfare.
- Establishing relationships with key personnel in relevant government departments and State agencies to advocate for TPSP and young parents at a national level.
- Collaborating with other organisations and programs sharing interests in supporting young parents in areas like housing, childcare, and parenting assistance.
- Arranging training sessions for TPSP staff members.
- Collecting, sorting, and analysing comprehensive data from the TPSP database on referrals and services provided by the TPSP. This data is utilised for the annual TPSP Summary of Work, reports to Tusla, assessing outcomes and progress of young parents, and shaping TPSP policies and advocacy goals.
- Assisting TPSP projects in recruiting and onboarding new team members.
- Managing Tulsa's School Completion Programme (SCP).
- Addressing emerging issues such as referral criteria for the TPSP.
- Responding to inquiries from young parents and involved individuals.
- Maintaining the TPSP website.

Engagement

To ensure coherence and effective communication across all aspects of the TPSP structure, in 2023 the National Manager met and collaborated with all TPSP employing organisations, the TPSP National Advisory Committee, and TPSP project staff. The manager followed up on issues raised at these meetings to support TPSP staff, hosting organisations, and the overall national development of the TPSP.

During 2023 the National Manager represented the needs of young parents through participation and engagement with the following statutory and non-statutory agencies, relevant Departments, and community-based services:

- The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (ICEYH)
- The Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN)
- Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA)
- Department of Justice
- Department of Housing – Youth Strategy Steering Group
- Department of Housing – Supported Youth Housing Stakeholder Group
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science
- Department of Justice – reform of family law
- The Parenting Network
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) events
- Tusla events
- Donegal Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS)
- Tusla - Parenting Support Services
- Tusla - Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Group
- Tusla – PPFS
- Tusla - Education Welfare Services (TESS)
- Department of Children, Equality, Integration, Disability & Youth (DCEIDY) - The National Framework for Children and Young People
- Pobal – National Childcare Scheme
- The Children’s Rights Alliance – Dialogue briefings
- Tusla - Child and Family Support Networks
- Men’s Development Project, An Cosán - The Fatherhood Project
- Community Mothers - Waterford
- Health Services Executive – Social Inclusion Unit
- Dublin South – CYPSC
- EPIC
- Familibase – Hidden Harm conference
- Trinity University Centre for Maternity Care – Roundtable Research group
- Women’s Aid
- Homes for Good

National Development

In 2023, the National Manager collaborated with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) on their European Social Funding Plus (ESF+) programme proposal to expand the TPSP geographically, and to include young parents under 24 years of age. After the successful ESF+ funding acquisition by DCEDIY, the National Manager worked closely with DCEDIY's Parenting Policy Unit and Tusla's Prevention, Partnership, and Family Support programme national office throughout 2023 to plan the implementation of the expansion.

Throughout 2023, the Manager facilitated the TPSP expansion into the Young Parents Support Programme (YPSP) by participating in YPSP Steering Committee meetings, contributing to the expression of interest for selected greenfield sites, evaluating proposals, attending interviews as a panel member with Tusla representatives and the PPFs management team, identifying budgets for new sites, guiding ESF+ allocations for TPSP expansion sites, conducting research, overseeing the TPSP transition to the YPSP, and planning the rebranding process.

The National Manager will continue to assist with the expansion and transition from TPSP to YPSP in 2024 by supporting new sites both locally and nationally.

Policy and Advocacy

In 2023, the National Manager advocated for young parents in Ireland by submitting Pre-Budget submission to the Department of Social Protection (DSP), contributing to an internal review of the National Childcare Scheme by DCEDIY, and representing young parents and their children at various events hosted by organisations such as the CRA, DSP, DCEDIY, the National Early Learning and Childcare Agency, the National Youth Housing and Homelessness strategy advisory panel, and Children's Rights Alliance sessions with HSE and Tusla.

School Completion Programme (SCP)

The SCP, funded through Tusla's Education Support Services (TESS), aims to support young parents in completing the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent. In 2022/2023, the SCP received over €264,000 nationally, distributed among the 11 TPSP projects. The National Manager, alongside Treoir's Administrative and Finance Officer, managed this fund and reported to TESS.

Referrals to the Teen Parents Support Programme – National Statistics

In 2023, support was extended to 556 parents across eleven projects nationwide, including 509 young mothers and 47 young fathers. Given the multifaceted needs of young parents, TPSP Project Workers are skilled at addressing these needs by delivering comprehensive support grounded in holistic, evidence-based, and trauma-informed approaches. Common challenges faced by young parents include securing affordable housing, hidden homelessness, poverty, education/training barriers, employment obstacles, accessible childcare, domestic abuses, and mental health issues. Navigating these hurdles can be especially daunting for young parents due to their developmental stage. Project workers play a crucial role in assisting young parents by offering information, advocacy, and practical support. Through peer group sessions, personalised assistance, and home visits, project workers engage with young parents with the goal of guiding them through parenthood into adulthood, enhancing outcomes for both parents and their children.

Treoir Collaboration

In 2023, the National Manager collaborated closely with the broader Treoir staff team, participating in team meetings, new staff orientations, supporting the CEO, engaging in team training, contributing to Treoir's strategic planning review, attending impact framework meetings, Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) funding events, aiding in shared parenting services and support development, disseminating relevant information, and participating in events and stakeholder groups aligned with Treoir's strategic priorities.

07

Referrals in 2023



**9,551 YOUNG PARENTS
SUPPORTED SINCE 1999**

In 556 instances, TPSP workers noted that 26% of mothers mentioned living together with their partner at the time of referral, while 47% of fathers stated the same. Additionally, TPSP workers assisted 47 fathers and extended secondary support to other family members as required.

Fostering strong relationships between young parents and their families has been a key focus of TPSP efforts. This added assistance creates a stable living environment for young parents and their children, especially since 54% of young parents live in either their family home or their partner's residence.

TPSP Extends Support to Young Parents Nationwide

In 2023, TPSPs supported 556 young parents, consisting of 509 mothers and 47 fathers. Among them, 215 were new contacts, representing 31% of all young parent births that year.

During the year, 158 cases required follow-up cases, 37 were reopened, and 146 were successfully closed. Since its establishment in 1999, TPSP has assisted a total of 9,551 young parents.

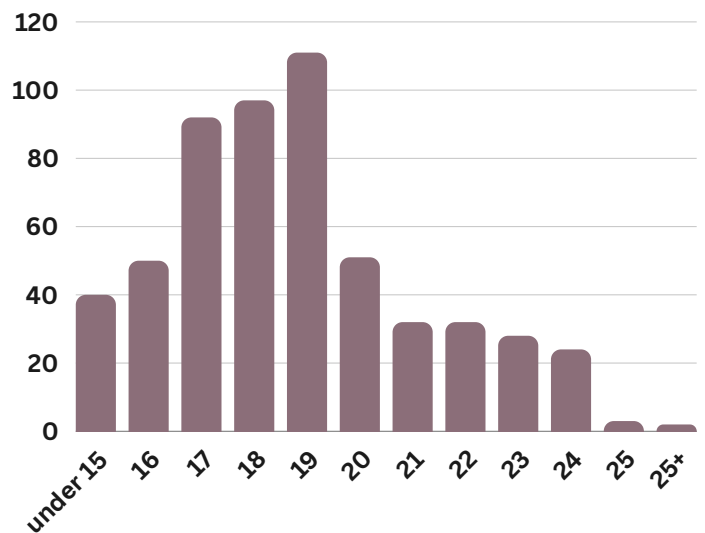
The majority of supported young parents (70%) came from urban areas, while 22% were from rural regions. The remaining origin was unknown upon referral. Notably, the programme predominantly focused on assisting young mothers in most cases.



Age Profile of Referrals in 2023

Statistics Show Increase in Younger Parents Seeking Assistance from TPSP

In 2023, 40 young parents referred to the TPSP were 15 years old or under, while 50 were 16 years old. The majority of referrals, 300 in total, were young parents aged between 17 and 19. Additionally, 149 were between the ages of 20 and 25, accounting for 27% of new referrals that year. Over time, the TPSP has seen a consistent increase in young parents aged 20 and over seeking assistance. As a result, the expansion of service provision geographically has also led to an increase in age-range criteria to young parents under 24 years of age.



Distribution of Mothers' Age Profile

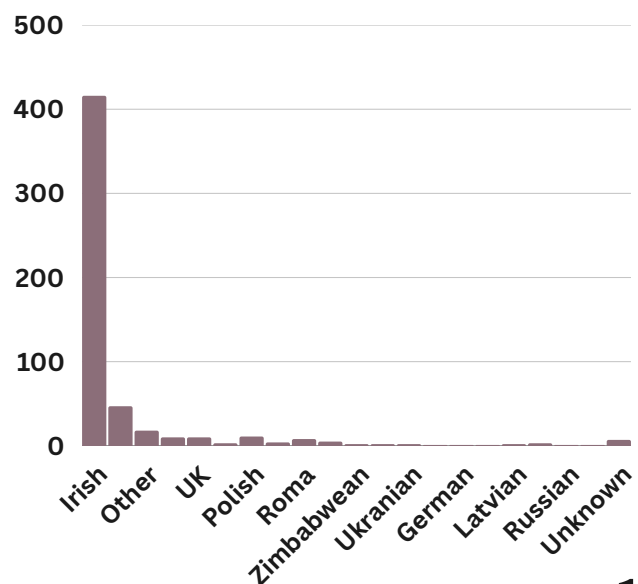
Out of the 40 parents who were 15 years old or younger at the time of referral, 37 were mothers. Furthermore, 48 mothers were 16 years old, 275 fell within the 17 to 19 age range, and 149 were in the 20-25 age bracket. Historically, a greater number of referrals were directed towards younger parents at the TPSP. However, there has been a noticeable shift in recent times, with a trend showing that young parents are now more commonly found in the older age categories of their teenage years and early twenties.

Nationality/Cultural Identity of Referrals

In 2023, the TPSP supported young parents from 19 different nationalities who disclosed their identities. Among 556 parents who specified their nationality, 416 were Irish, 47 were Irish Travellers, and the remaining identified themselves as either EU or non-EU citizens.

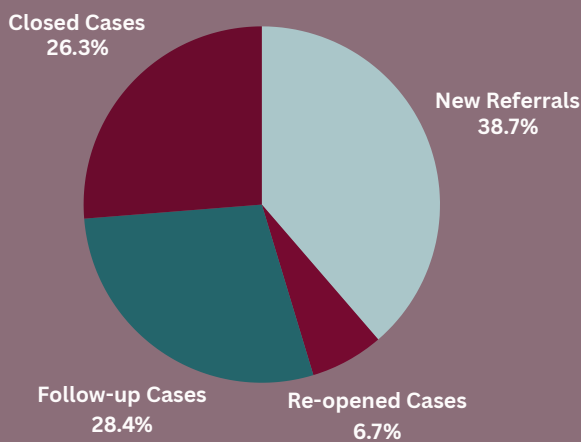
Father's Age Profile

In 2023, a total of 47 fathers received assistance from their TPSP. Among them, 3 fathers were 15 years old or younger, 2 were 16 years old, 25 fell within the age range of 17 to 19, and 17 were between 20 and 24 years old. Typically, fathers referred to their TPSP are in their late teens to early twenties.



Status of Cases in 2023

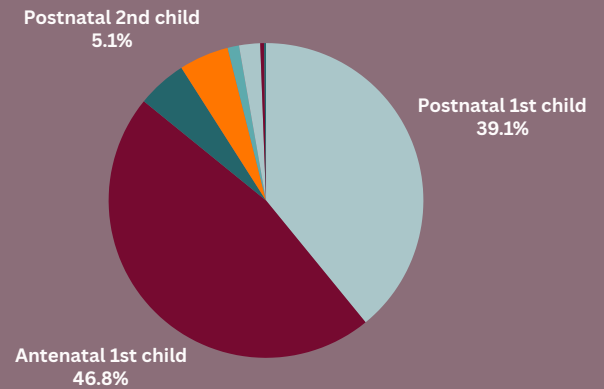
In 2023, there were 215 new referrals, consisting of young parents visiting their TPSP for the first time. While some young parents may disengage from their TPSP for various reasons, 37 individuals had their cases reopened in 2023, receiving renewed assistance from TPSP support workers.



Following a referral, support workers stay in touch with young parents until they decide to end their service or until their child is no longer eligible for assistance. In 2023, there were a total of 158 follow-up cases, which occur where parents end their support or have not engaged regularly and their project worker leaves their case open and attempts to re-engage. In 2023, 146 cases were resolved due to reasons such as the child reaching the age limit, parent disengagement, or parents fulfilling their requirements and transitioning to another service.



Pregnancy Status of Cases



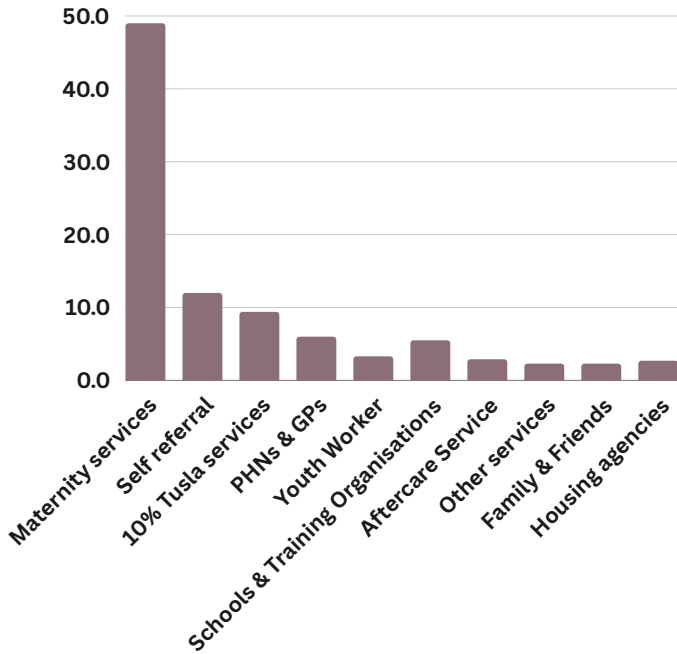
In 2023, the majority of young parents (238 cases) were referred to their local TPSP during their first pregnancy. After the birth of their first child, an extra 199 cases were directed to the programme. When expecting their second child, 26 young parents sought assistance, and 26 were referred after the birth. Support decreased for parents during or after their third or fourth child.

Health During Pregnancy

TPSP staff work closely with mothers during pregnancy to promote their overall health. Project workers will provide support around accessing maternity services, with 42.6% of referrals receiving this support. In 2023, 27 new antenatal referrals had concealed their pregnancy, meaning interventions from project workers is vital for mother and baby.

In 2023, project workers were asked by the National Manager to gather information on nutritional supplements during pregnancy; only 126 mothers were regularly taking supplements. This has led to treoir seeking funding to support and promote the importance of younger expectant mothers taking nutritional supplements based on medical research.

Mothers' Referral Source, 2023

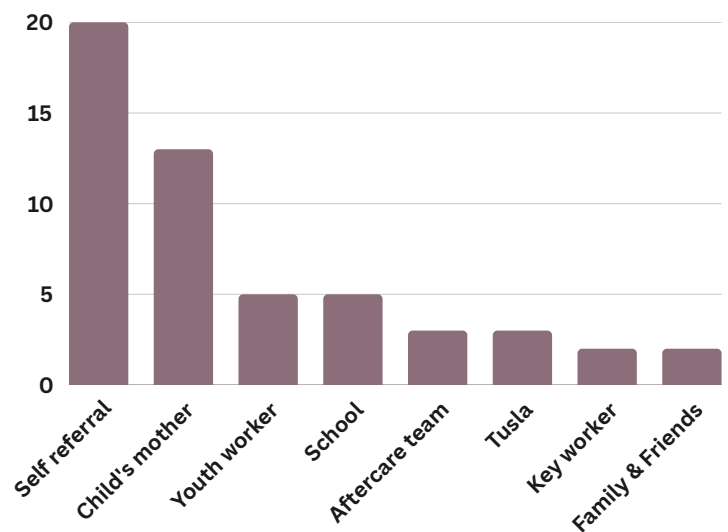


Referral Pathways to TPSP for Young Parents

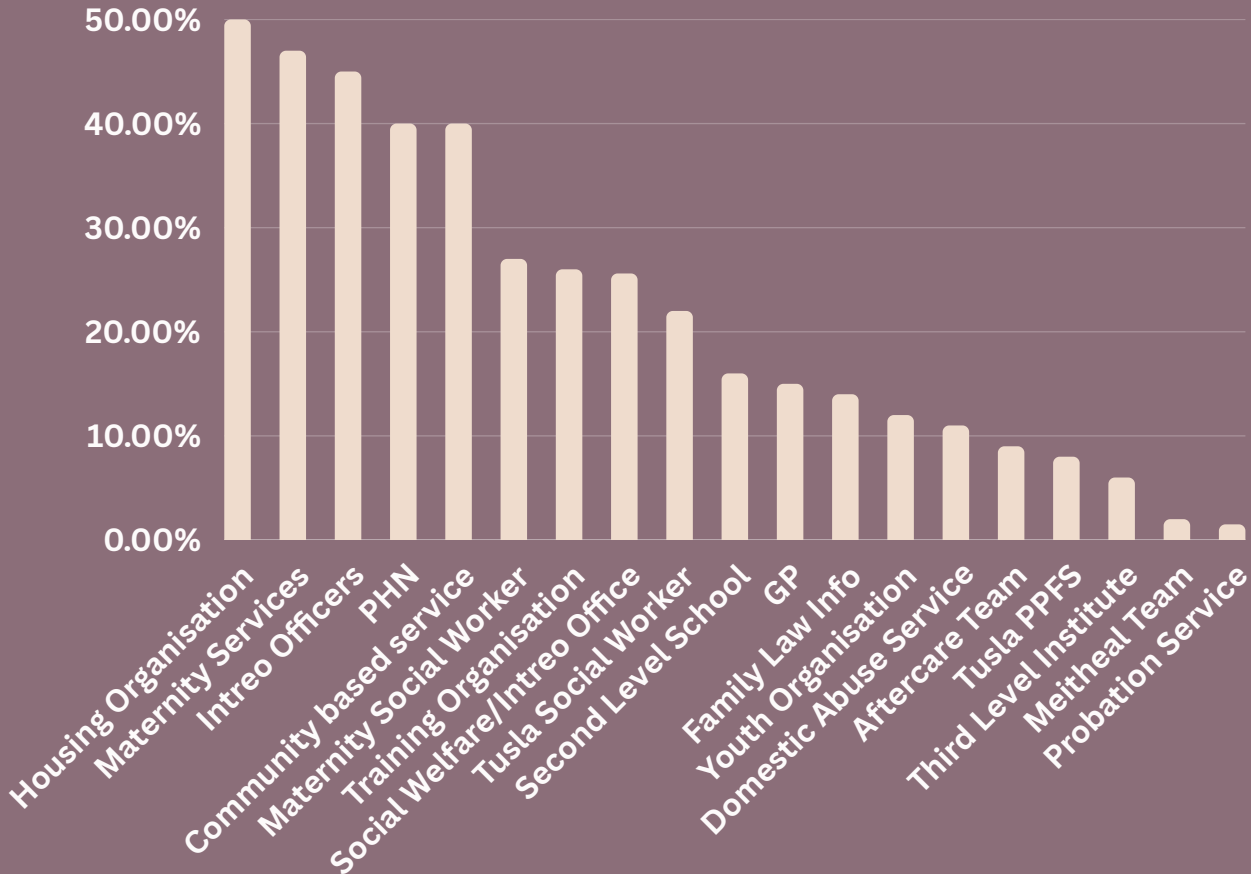
Young parents often find their local TPSP through a variety of channels – via self-referral, family/friends, or agencies. Typically, mothers are referred through maternity services while fathers tend to refer themselves. In 2023, maternal referrals made up 49% of all referrals to the TPSP, with self-referrals and Tusla social workers/local Tusla services being the second-largest referral source.

Fathers' Referral Source, 2023

In 2023, fathers primarily accessed TPSP services through referrals by Tusla social workers or Tusla services. However, self-referrals are increasingly prevalent, underscoring a heightened awareness of TPSP within local services. Another notable referral pathway for fathers was through the child's mother, particularly in cases where both parents co-parent or reside together with their child.



Interagency collaboration - Mothers



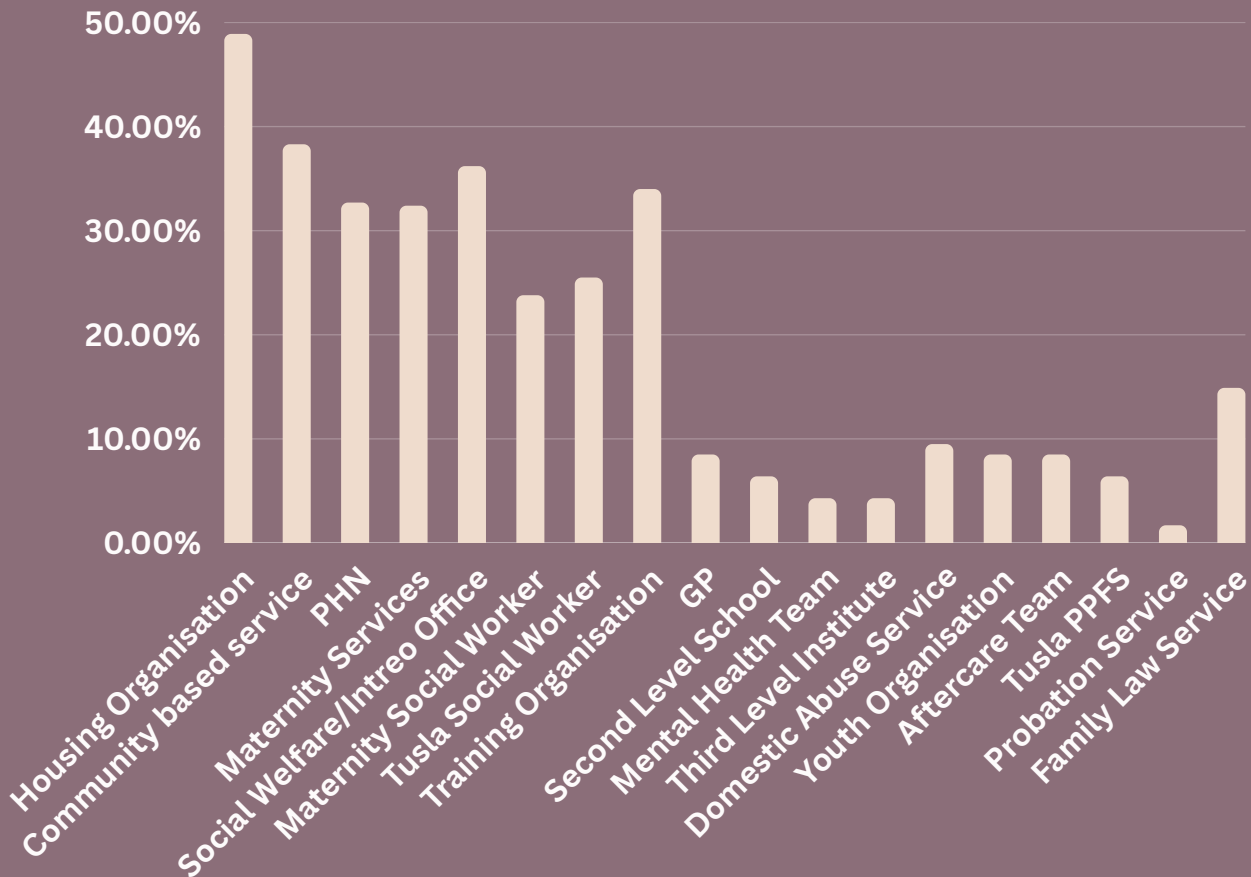
Collaboration with local services and agencies is vital in supporting young parents and their families. Project workers often engage with other services on behalf of young parents, with the highest level of engagement being with housing organisations at 50% for mothers.

A significant percentage of project workers support young mothers with antenatal education, while also appointment arrangements, and accompanying them to maternity services. In 2023, 47% of mothers utilised the help of their project workers in engaging maternity services, 40% with public health nurses, and 27% with maternity social workers to aid young parents facing various issues and navigating challenges.

As young parents begin to find their financial independence it is vital they engage with the Department of Social Protection. Many project workers will support young parents in navigating the processes of applying for social protection payments, with this ordinarily being their first time applying for supports given their young age. In 2023, project workers supported 45% of young mothers engaging with DSP/Intreo.

Remaining linked into other community-based supports is also very important as young parents may require a variety of supports or programmes and projects to aid in their self-development on their journey from their youth into adulthood and parenthood. In 2023, 40% of projects workers referred or sign-posted mothers to other services within their community.

Interagency collaboration - Fathers



In 2023, project workers assisted 48.9% of young fathers in connecting with housing support organisations, which is comparable to the engagement levels of young mothers. Training organisations represented the second highest area of inter-agency work for project workers working with young fathers.

Similarly to young mothers, project workers helped 36% of young fathers secure their financial entitlements from the Department of Social Protection.

Project workers encourage young fathers to join the young mother in attending antenatal services. In 2023, 32.4% of young fathers participated in these services and engaged in antenatal education to support the young mother.

Additionally, project workers guide young parents to various services to meet other needs identified by the young parents or suggested by the project worker as valuable support. In 2023, 38.3% of young fathers accessed other community-based services.

*Maternity Social Workers are not available in all maternity services

Education and Training

In 2023, a total of 496 young parents shared their insights about their education and training status. The findings revealed that 69% of participants were no longer engaged in education, while 30% were actively pursuing educational opportunities or training. Additionally, five young mothers had previously postponed their education. Among those who were antenatal at the time of referral, 48 indicated they had left education due to pregnancy.

Regarding the highest level of education attained, 48% of parents reported having completed their formal education.

Of the respondents, 28.5% were early school leavers, and 22% had completed their junior certificate. Furthermore, 45% of parents finished 2nd level or a PLC course, while 19.5% left school before completing their leaving certificate, and 13 achieved 3rd level education. Notably, 46% of those who had left education expressed intentions to return in the future.

Further analysis indicated that 42% of individuals not engaged in education or who left school early had a social care/work background. In addition, 58% of mothers, and 70% of fathers lived in DEIS areas.

Childcare

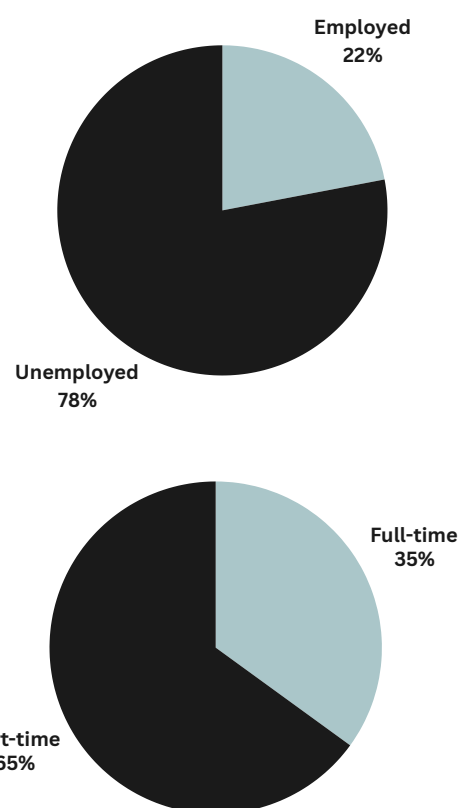
In 2023, 366 young mothers provided information regarding their childcare needs. 38% reported that they did not require childcare at the time of referral, 11% were antenatal and did not yet know if they would need childcare. 39% felt their childcare needs were met, while 14% said their needs were only partially met.

Employment

In 2023, a total of 469 parents shared their employment status information. Among these parents, 22% were employed at the time of referral. Notably, most of these employed parents had access to childcare, primarily through private childminders, and they tended to be in the older age range.

Of those who provided employment details, the majority (65%) worked part-time while also receiving social protection payments, with the one-parent family payment being the most prevalent form of assistance (60%). This underscores the significance of in-work supports for young parents. Additionally, fathers demonstrated a higher employment rate, representing 43% of the employed parents, in contrast to only 18% of mothers.

It's also noteworthy that all mothers working part-time were receiving social protection payments.



Level of Need

During the referral stage, project workers evaluate the extent of support required by young parents to identify the necessary interventions and gain a deeper understanding of each case. As depicted in charts 1 and 2, the level of need presented by both mothers and fathers in 2023 was comparable, with most parents classified as Hardiker level 3. This category indicates the requirement for therapeutic support and services for children and families undergoing severe difficulties. It's our expectation that the level of need will decrease after project workers offer suitable intervention to parents.

Chart 1: Level of need, Mother

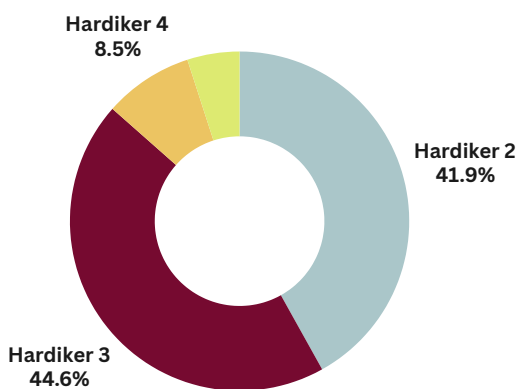
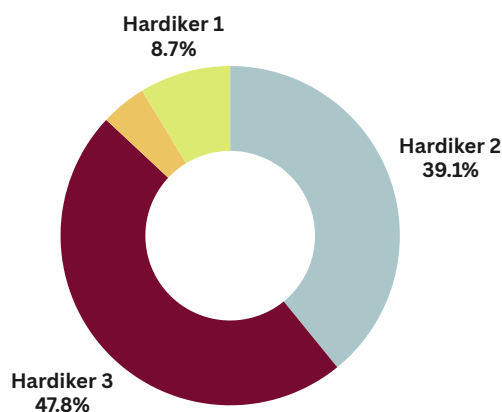


Chart 2: Level of need, Father



Hardiker 1 - Universal preventative and social development service needs.

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

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

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

Positive Outcomes for Young Parents in the 2023 TPSP

In 2023, over half of the closed cases indicated a reduced level of need compared to their original referral to the TPSP. This improvement can be attributed to the dedicated support from project workers, who foster strong relationships with young parents to encourage their involvement and identify the essential services and assistance they require.

Chart 3 illustrates a notable change in the level of need, with over 46% moving from level 3 to level 2. This shift indicates that while parents are no longer facing challenging situations, they may still require additional services and support as they transition out of the TPSP. If necessary, these parents are directed to other agencies or services that can provide further assistance.

To enhance support for young parents, the TPSP actively maintains close relationships with various organisations to ensure a prompt response to their needs. The collaboration between TPSP and other agencies has been crucial in effectively supporting young parents.

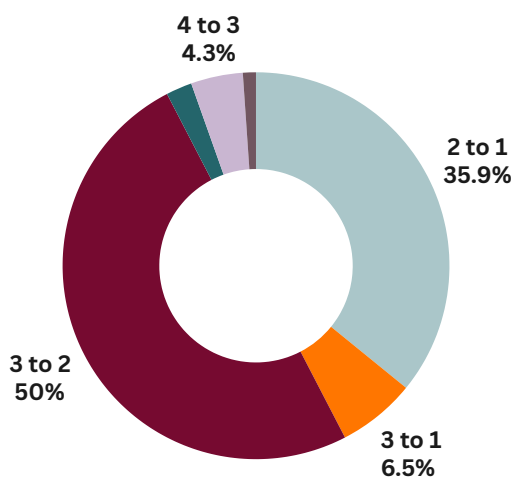


Chart 3: Lowered level of need

Young Parent Housing and Homelessness in 2023

In 2023, the majority of parents, accounting for 47%, continued to live in their family homes. This arrangement is often influenced by the young age of the parent, as individuals under 18 are not eligible for any form of social housing assistance. While many young parents living with their own parents enjoy stable living conditions, some face challenges, especially if their relationship with their parents has become strained after the pregnancy. A smaller group, comprising 8%, has managed to secure private rented housing through the Housing Assistance Payment scheme provided by local authorities. Notably, 84% of these parents are aged between 18 and 23, given that local authorities do not accept housing assistance applications from those under 18.

Additionally, there are 13 parents living in private rented accommodations without any assistance, with just one parent receiving a rent supplement.

While 7% of young parents are classified as homeless, 22% find themselves in unsuitable living conditions, whether in their partner's parents' home or with another family member.

In many instances, project workers from TPSP serve as advocates for young parents, helping them engage with landlords and local authorities to secure appropriate housing. This advocacy can include assisting young parents in applying for social housing or accompanying them to view private rental properties.

08 Complexities and Challenges

The number of births among young parents has declined throughout the duration of the TPSP. In 2000, there were 3,135 births to mothers under 20, resulting in a fertility rate of 19.1%. By 2023, this figure dropped to 705 births, with a corresponding fertility rate of 3.5%. While there has been a notable reduction in births to young parents, those who do become parents at a young age encounter considerable challenges. This section gives an over view of some of the more consistent challenges and the complexity these challenges present in many young parent referrals within the TPSP

Domestic Abuse

Recent years have seen a rise in domestic violence cases among young parents. Disturbing statistics reveal that by 2025, 1 in 4 young mothers will have faced domestic violence, either currently or in the past, marking a 6% increase from 2022 figures. Additionally, young fathers reported experiencing domestic violence at a rate of 13.3%. The TPSP project workers provide essential information on domestic violence services and support, including emotional assistance during these difficult times.

Coercive Control

In 2023, TPSP support workers were tasked with collecting data on coercive control (CC). The findings revealed that 20% of young mothers reported experiencing CC from a current or former partner, while 7% of fathers acknowledged experiencing various forms of CC.

TPSP staff are becoming increasingly worried about the prevalence of CC. In 16 cases identified in 2023, project workers detected CC, yet the young parents either hesitated to disclose their experiences or were unaware that they might be facing this type of domestic abuse.

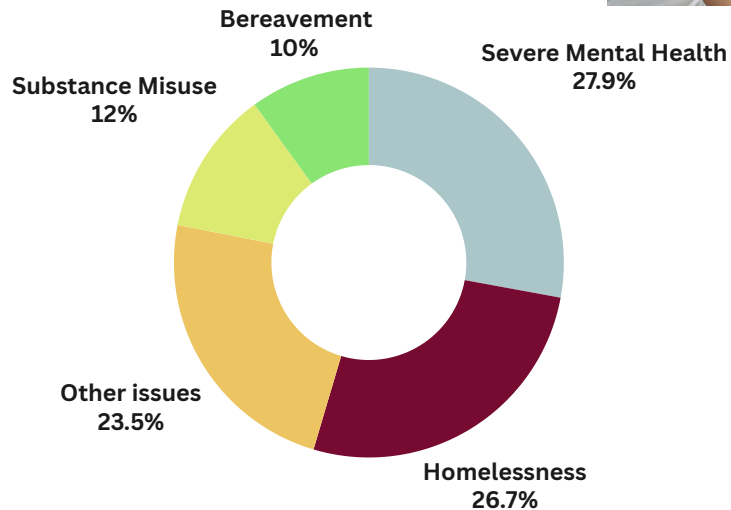
Court Orders

In many cases young parents will seek orders of protection from the Court. TPSP workers will often assist young parents in applications to the Court, engaging with DV services and An Guards Siochana personnel. Of the total number of young mothers who have experienced DV and/or CC, 11 have Protection Orders, 9 have Safety Orders, and 4 have Barring Orders against their current or former partners. Six mothers are currently subject to Protection Orders, while one mother is subject to a Barring Order. Out of the number of fathers who have experienced DV and/or CC, none have sought the protection of the Court, while one father is subject to a Protection Order.

Adverse Issues Affecting Young Parents

MOTHERS

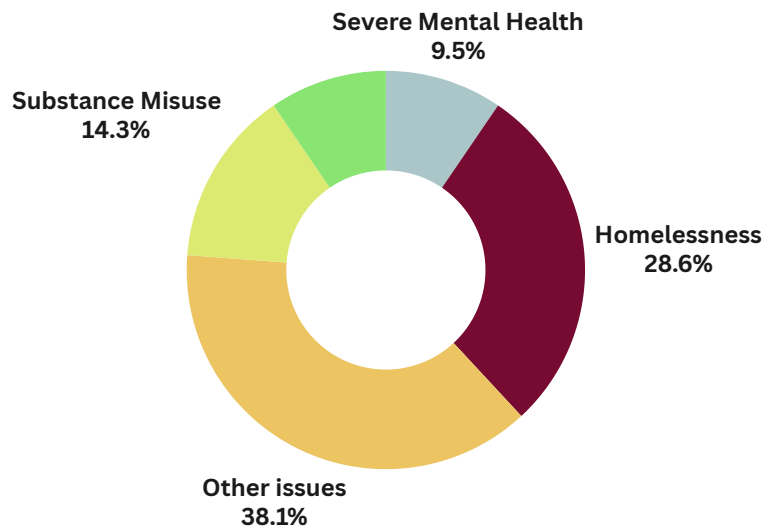
Nearly 50% of young mothers have reported facing a range of challenges that affect their lives. The most prevalent issues include serious mental health concerns, homelessness, substance abuse, and recent loss of loved ones.



FATHERS



More than half of young fathers reported facing a range of challenges similar to those experienced by young mothers. Among these issues, homelessness was notably more prevalent among fathers. Additionally, substance misuse was higher in this group, while severe mental health concerns were significantly less common.



Social care History - Mothers, Fathers and their Children

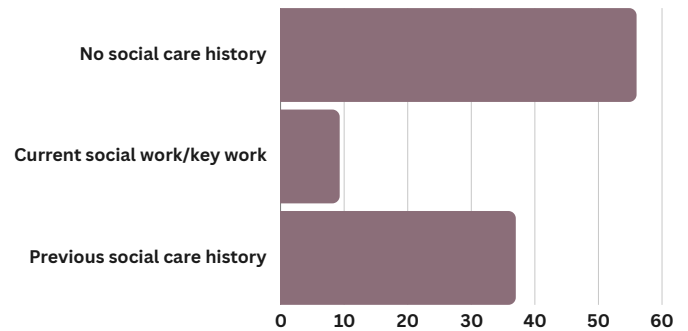
In 2023, among 394 young parents who shared details about their social care history, 56% indicated that they had no current or past involvement with care or key work. Meanwhile, 37% of parents reported a prior engagement with social work, and 9.3% were actively working with a social worker or a child and family support worker.

At the time of referral, 3 young mothers were in state care, while 38 had previously experienced care, and 2 young fathers had a history of being in care.

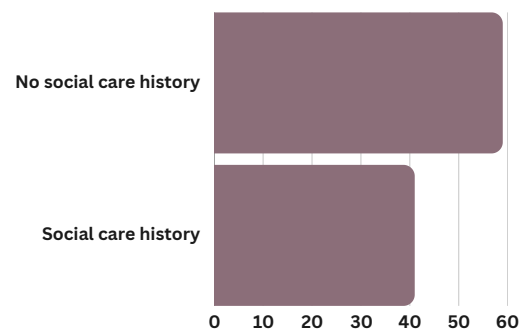
In 2023, data gathered from 145 parents provided insights into their partner's past or present involvement with social care. Among those surveyed, 59% indicated they had no previous engagement with social work or key work, while 41% reported a history of social care involvement.

In the context of parents sharing details about their child's social care history during the postnatal period, it was found that 78% of children had neither past nor present social care involvement. Meanwhile, 11% were currently receiving assistance from family support workers or social workers, and 10% had a history of social care involvement in the past.

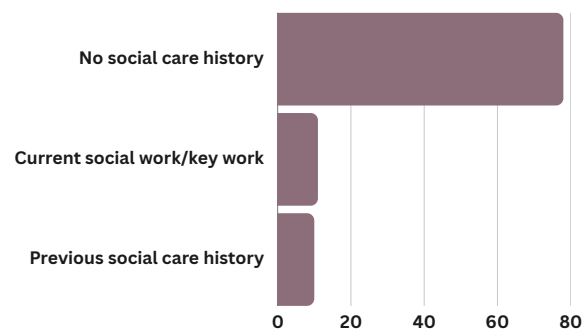
Social Care History of Primary Client



Social Care History of Other parent



Social Care History of Child



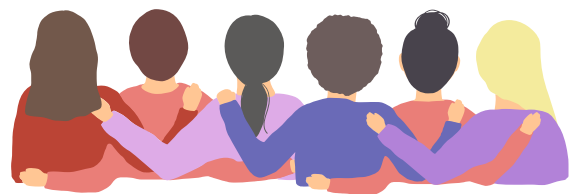
09 Supports and Programmes Provided in 2023

In 2023, TPSP support workers provided an extensive array of services tailored to meet the unique needs of young parents, many of whom face complex challenges. TPSP Project Workers are skilled in addressing these requirements by offering personalised support services through an integrated, evidence-based, and trauma-informed approach. Common difficulties encountered by young parents include, but are not limited to: affordable housing, hidden homelessness, poverty, limited access to education, training and employment opportunities, affordable and flexible childcare, exposure to domestic violence, and mental health issues.

Navigating these obstacles can be particularly challenging due to the developmental stage of young parents. Project workers offer guidance and support by providing essential information, advocacy, and practical assistance. They engage young parents through peer group sessions, one-on-one support, and home visits. The primary objective of this program is to help parents on their parenting journey and enhance their overall outcomes, as well as those of their young children.

Parenting Support

In 2023, young parents were offered a variety of support mechanisms to aid them in their parenting roles. A substantial number of mothers (85%) and fathers (81%) benefited from one-on-one support from their project workers. Additionally, 35% of mothers and 25% of fathers engaged in group peer work, while 39% of mothers and 19% of fathers attended parenting courses. Furthermore, 70% of parents received in-home support through initiatives like home visits. The project provides both group and individual work for young parents, featuring evidence-based parenting programs and courses such as Mellow Bumps, the Good Enough Parent, and Partnership with Parents. They also offer guidance and personal counseling aimed at enhancing parents' personal growth, educational achievements, and employment opportunities, all while boosting their confidence.

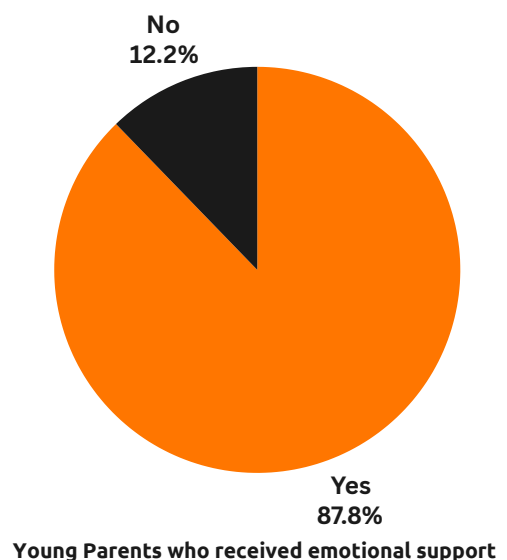


SUPPORT



Emotional Support with Building Relationships

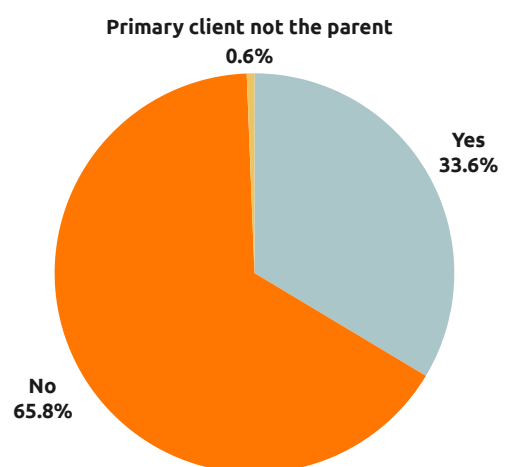
In 2023, project workers provided emotional support to 90% of mothers and 74% of fathers facing difficulties in their relationships with partners and family members, particularly as they transitioned into young parenthood. This assistance encompassed support for mothers (41%) and fathers (70%) in their communication with one another, navigating challenging relationships with maternal (46%) and paternal (26%) family members, and sustaining a reliable support system. Since many young parents reside with family, it's crucial to rebuild these relationships for their mental health, well-being, and sense of security at home.



THE GOAL OF THE PROJECT IS TO ASSIST BOTH PARENTS WHILE PROMOTING THE GROWTH OF POSITIVE PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS WHENEVER FEASIBLE.

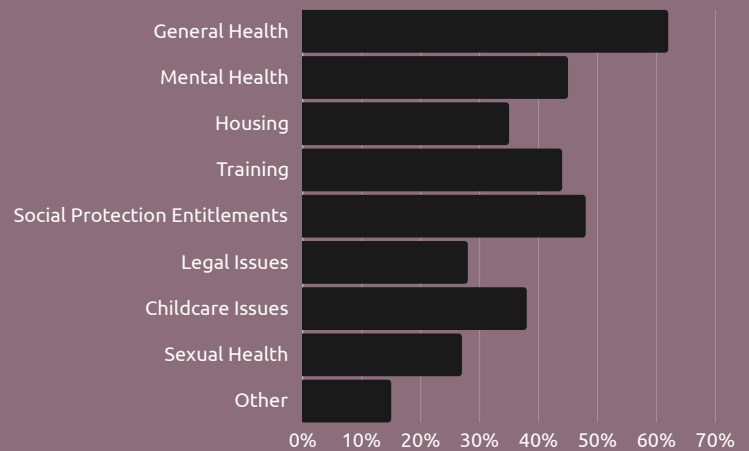
Building parenting relationships - Fathers

Project workers engage with non-primary parents to provide support and foster healthy relationships, especially focusing on young fathers. In 2023, a total of 216 non-primary parents, primarily young fathers, were contacted to enhance their parenting skills and strengthen their bond with their children, often leading to improved relationships with the children's mothers and extended family. Notably, 45% of mothers identified the child's father as their main source of emotional support. In cases that were closed, there was a significant 21% rise in fathers' contact with their children, thanks to the assistance from TPSP.



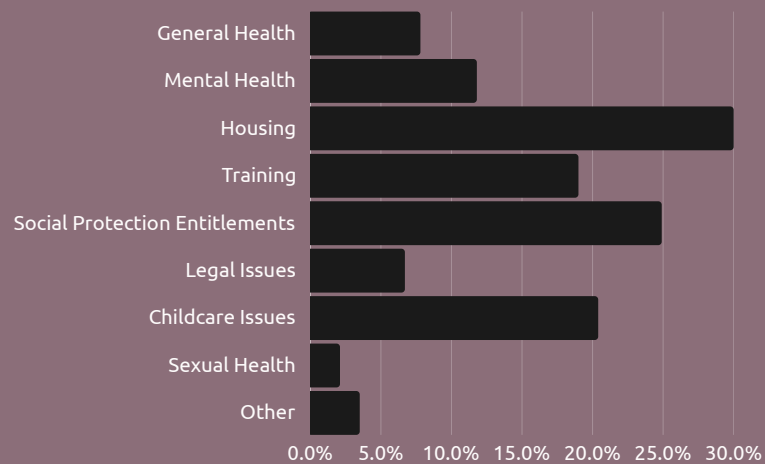
Information Provision

TPSP support workers offer young parents valuable information on multiple areas of their lives, including housing, education, social protection, family law, mental and overall health, childcare, and financial assistance. They also help with support applications and advocacy efforts. Statistics reveal that a considerable portion of parents received guidance on general health, mental health, social protection benefits, training opportunities, and housing assistance. Particularly noteworthy is that 35% of those residing in their family home obtained information regarding housing support.



Advocacy

TPSP support advocates for parents by reaching out to various agencies and services to help them gain access to essential supports, particularly in securing housing and childcare placements. The ongoing housing crisis poses significant challenges for parents; however, project workers are there to assist them in navigating the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) to secure the childcare they need.



10

TPSP/YPSP Projects Contact List

Carlow, Kilkenny South Tipperary

Bernie Loughman, Project Leader
St. Catherine's Community Services,
St. Joseph's Road,
Carlow
Tel: 059 - 9138700 / 085 1101511
Email: bernie@catherines.ie

Cork

Martina Twomey, Project Leader
Childhood Matters
Address: Blackrock, Cork City, T12 CRA0
Tel: 021-4357730 / 087-1096373
Email: mtwomey@childhood-matters.ie

Donegal (Letterkenny, Finn Valley, Inishowen)

Jacqueline Doherty & Michelle Maguire, Project Workers
Foreige,
2 Cedar House,
Mian Street, Ballybofey
Tel: 074 - 9190141 / **Jacqueline** 086 8371335, **Michelle** 086 8186345

Galway

Natasha Fahy, Project Leader
Ground Floor, Nurses Home, University College Hospital,
Galway
Tel: 091 - 544960 / 085 7633243
Email: natasham.fahy@hse.ie

Limerick

Joanne Ryan, Project Coordinator
Limerick Social Services Council,
Henry Street,
Limerick
Tel: 086 6020588
Email: joanne.ryan@issc.ie

Louth

Karen Byrne, Project Leader, PPFS South Louth
Tusla, Southgate Shopping Centre,
Colpe Cross, Drogheda
Tel: 041 2152338
Email: karenm.byrne@tusla.ie

Wexford

Eanna Byrne, Project Leader
Barnardos, Castle Hill, Enniscorthy,
Wexford
Tel: 053 - 9236342
Email: eanna.byrne@barnardos.ie

Dublin Based Projects

Ballyfermot, Bluebell, Inchicore

Shaunie Kelly, Project Leader
Familibase, Blackditch Road,
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Tel: 086 3889205
Email: shaunie.kelly@familibase.ie

Dublin Southwest

Sharon Fitzmaurice, Project Leader
Barnardos, 10 Newlandscross Business Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Tel: 01 - 4032081
Email: sharon.fitzmaurice@barnardos.ie

Coolock

(Dublin 5, 13, 17,
and parts of 3 &
9)

Lydia Smith, Project Leader
Doras Bui, Bunratty Drive, Coolock, Dublin 17
Tel: 01 8484811
Email: lydia.smith@dorasbui.ie

Finglas

Annemarie Kelly, Project Leader
St,. Oliver Plunketts Junior School,
St. Helena's Road, Finglas, Dublin 11
Tel: 01 - 864 4040

Kildare

Denise Loughnane, Project Manager, Foroige, Rosconnell
Community Centre, 12 & 13 Rosconnell Close, Newbridge, Co.
Kildare
Tel: 086 203 1882
Email: denise.loughnane@foroige.ie

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Treoir manages the coordination of the TPSP and YPSP nationally.

