

Conference Proceedings



teenparents
support programme

**10th
Anniversary
Conference**

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- Robbie Coleman and Karl French for entertaining us with an original rap.
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Last but not least we would like to thank all of the Conference delegates for their enthusiastic contributions on the day.

Margaret Morris

National Co-ordinator, TPSP

Executive Summary

The 10th Anniversary Conference of the Teen Parents Support Programme was planned to celebrate the success of the TPSP and of the young people it has supported. The Conference also aimed to share the accumulated expertise of TPSP staff and with others who have contact with young parents

The Conference began with opening remarks by Margaret Morris, the National Co-ordinator of the TPSP. Margaret spoke about the aims of the TPSP, its model of working, the importance of the TPSP staff as well as preliminary findings from an analysis of teen parents who engaged with the TPSP from 2005 to 2008. Following Margaret's introduction, Dr. Aisling Gillen, HSE National Specialist Family Support and chair of the morning session, spoke about the HSE's commitment to the TPSP and introduced Professor Pat Dolan.

Professor Dolan spoke about coping with teen parenthood and the importance of building resilience and coping skills in young parents.

Sheila Lawlor, Principal Social Worker in University College Hospital Galway spoke about the origins of the TPSP and its development over the past ten years. Sheila also highlighted its importance to Health Services and referred to the future of the Programme.

Ashley and Marie Keenan from Dublin gave an informative and personal account of their experience of participating in the Dublin West TPSP and the benefits they gained from being involved with the Programme.

To end the morning, there was a short Question and Answers session which gave members of the audience an opportunity to make comments and put questions to the morning panel. David Simpson then introduced the various Workshops which completed the morning session.

The afternoon session began with Robbie and Karl, two young men from Ballyfermot, who entertained the delegates with an original rap. Following this a rapporteur from each Workshop presented an overview of the aims and the key learning outcomes from the Workshops.

Alison Loughlin, Director of the Parenting Forum in Northern Ireland also spoke during the afternoon about her experience of building the capacity to work with fathers through Kick Start, a programme that gives organisations the tools to work with fathers. KickStart is very

successful and is now in its sixth year. This was followed by Marie Collins, a Project Worker with the Wexford TPSP, who presented a practical example of how young parents, who are no longer in a relationship, can be supported through the process of mediation to parent together effectively. Finally Pamela Long spoke about being one of the first young mothers to become involved with the TPSP 10 years ago and how it enhanced her life. To end the Conference, a short Questions and Answers session gave conference delegates a chance to make some comments about the TPSP and how it can move forward in the future. Margaret Morris then briefly thanked everyone involved in making the 10th Anniversary Conference a successful celebration of the achievements of young parents and TPSP staff. Themes which emerging from the conference included:

- The TPSP provides a personalised service by listening and responding to the needs of each young parent rather than a 'one size fits all' service. The commitment of TPSP and the quality of the relationships they develop with the young parents is key to the success of the Programme.
- The current TPSP programme is working very effectively, it provides value for money and there is no requirement to implement new 'flavour of the month' programmes.
- Developing resilience in young people and viewing them as civic actors contributing to society can not only help the young person to feel valued but can also benefit the community as a whole.
- Encouraging connectivity is an important element of helping young parents combine successful parenting with their development as an adolescent.
- Developing a capacity to work with fathers and encouraging them to engage with programmes doesn't require an entire new programme but shifting a mind-set and taking small steps that can eventually lead to large goals being achieved.
- Through mediation the TPSP can assist young parents to work together to parent effectively even when the relationship between the two parents has broken down.
- The TPSP can a positive impact on the long term outcomes of young parents who engage with it as demonstrated by Pamela Long.

Introduction to the Teen Parents Support Programme

The Teen Parents Support Programme is funded by the HSE to provide support services for young people who become parents while still in their teens. Since its establishment, the TPSP has supported over 3,000 young parents with all aspects of their lives including health, relationships, accommodation, social welfare entitlements, legal issues, education, training, child development, parenting, childcare and anything about which the young person is concerned. Grandparents and other family members involved with the young parent may also be supported.

There are 11 TPSPs throughout the country each based in an employing organisation from either the statutory or voluntary sector. Nationally, the TPSP structure consists of a National Co-ordinator who is based in Treoir and a National Advisory Committee which provides a forum for information sharing and interagency collaboration.

The main aim of the Teen Parents Support Programme is to provide services to enhance and support the well-being of young parents and their children, empower young parents in their parenting role and encourage equality of opportunity.

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.

Welcome and Overview of the TPSP

Margaret Morris, National Coordinator, TPSP

Good Morning. You are all very welcome here today to NUIG and with the weather, and everything else that is going on in the background, we really appreciate you getting here. I know it was very difficult for some of you to get here from places like the South East so we really appreciate it. I am just going to say a few words. One of our aims for today is to keep the programme on schedule so we can get you back home safely.

The concept for a model of working with young parents, which has evolved into the TPSP, came originally from the Social Work Department in NUIG. That is why we are back here today 10 years later and why we have chosen Galway to celebrate our 10th Anniversary. Later on, Sheila Lawlor, who is the Principal Social Worker in the Hospital, will be talking about what motivated her to lobby for a Programme such as this and what has been her experience of working very closely with the Programme since then.

When we made the decision to mark this event and celebrate it, one of the things that we wanted to do, as well as celebrating our own work, was to mark the achievements of the young parents that we have worked with down the years. That is why I particularly want to welcome the young parents who have come here today to be with us. We hope that you get something from the day and that you enjoy yourselves, which is very important.

There are a few reminders and one change to the Programme that I want to point out. I need to give you the usual kind of reminders about turning off your mobile phones; I will give you a second to do that. The fire exits are here and at the back and in the unlikely event of a fire we will meet in the car park but hopefully none of that will happen. The other change, of course, that I must mention is that we do not have the Minister here today. The Dáil does not usually sit on a Friday but with all that is currently going on economically, the Dáil is sitting today, so unfortunately he sends his apologies and he sends his best wishes for the day.

Since the TPSP began, we have supported over 3000 Young Parents in all areas of their lives. We have supported them emotionally; supported their families; supported them in coping with the initial shock of finding out about the pregnancy; supported them to grow into being parents; supported them with their education and their health; with the important relationships in their lives; with understanding child development and with childcare. This is a holistic

Programme that aims to cover all areas of the life of a young person. In doing this, we are trying to build on the skills that the young parents already have and to help them to use pre-existing support networks that are there for them. This Programme aims mainly to supplement what is going on already in their lives and to help them to grow into and take on the challenges of being a young person as well as being a parent. That is quite a challenge and it is what we are trying to help them achieve.

When the Programme was evaluated in 2002 and there was a decision made to mainstream the pilot projects, one of the findings that arose from the evaluation was that the young people involved very much appreciated that fact that there was a specific Programme and a set of supports dedicated to them. It was identified as a key reason for the success of the TPSP. This is a customised service which we deliver based on the individual needs of the young parents because, contrary to what sometimes appears in the media, there is no such thing as a stereotypical teen parent.

In 2005, we started collecting very detailed data on the parents that we were working with and we are now coming to the end of a process of analysing that data. We found results that we think were very positive and encouraging. For example, it is the case that if you are an early school leaver you are more at risk of becoming a young parent. On the other hand, over 50% of our young parents were still in education. The majority of them complete their education, go on to third level and go on to become financially independent. As I have said, you can look at the stereotype but it is a much more complex picture than that. One of the other results that we identified was in relation to contact between fathers and their children. About 60% of fathers had regular contact with them. Now, there is still some work to be done in all services that come in contact with young men, and how they engage with young men who are parents, but nonetheless we found it very encouraging that a high proportion of young fathers had contact with their children. We also found that over time that level of contact increased and that is something that you might not have expected.

We also found that most young people already have good support networks in place. Only 2% of the young parents that we worked with had no other form of support apart from the TPSP. Mainly that support was from family, in particular the maternal grandmother. In a lot of cases the father of the child was also one of the main supports for the young mother. We also looked at the kind of supports that parents took up as part of what was offered to them on the programme. Around 80% of our young parents get support for their health

including antenatal, postnatal and general health support. Around 60% of the young parents get support with their role as parents and support with their parenting skills.

What we have not been able to measure in this piece of work is the impact of all of this support. For example, I said earlier, a lot of the young parents appreciated having a service that is dedicated to them and we know that many of them are reluctant to access mainstream antenatal maternity services. So, to have an antenatal course that is dedicated to them and to get one-to-one antenatal care must be of great support and many of the mothers here in Galway access this kind of support. However, we haven't been able to measure the long-term impact of that on the mothers and on their babies.



**Margaret Morris,
National Co-ordinator, TPSP**

The other thing that this piece of work doesn't really measure is the impact of the quality of the contact that I know that young people have with the staff. When the Evaluation Report was launched in 2002, one of its main finding indicated that a key part of the success of the Programme was the quality of the contact with the staff.

In this Programme we have 11 projects and in 2009 all of the projects combined got €1.8 million from the HSE. So, if there ever was value for money it is the TPSP. However, what you cannot put a price on is the quality of the support on offer to the young people and the quality of the staff. This is something I get a sense of when I meet with the Programmes and I hear the staff talk with such regard, enthusiasm and respect for the young people that they are supporting. I know that is something that is invaluable and part of today is to celebrate that and to give staff a chance to reflect on their achievements because this is complex work. Programme staff can go from dealing with somebody with a very low level of need in the morning to somebody with a very high level of need in the afternoon.

In addition our young parents go right across the social spectrum. We work with new communities, Traveller communities, mothers experiencing repeat pregnancies and a large proportion of parents who have been through the care system or have been in touch with the HSE Family Support Services. It takes a very skilled person who can implement a model which on the one hand is quite informal (because a young person needs informality) but on

the other hand is also able to support that young person to confront serious and important issues that arise in their lives. Being able to maintain that balance requires a particular mix of skills - not to mention being able to maintain the kind of energy and enthusiasm that I see in staff every day. So today is a day for TPSP staff to acknowledge your skills and your work and to celebrate your successes over the years. On that note I am going to finish up.

I want to introduce Dr. Aisling Gillen who is going to chair the morning proceedings. Aisling has worked in a variety of capacities. She has 15 years of clinical experience as a Speech & Language Therapist. As Disability Service Manager in Donegal she headed the development of a 10-year strategy for the development of Disability Services in Donegal. She also worked for 5 years as a Regional General Manager for Children's Services in the HSE West. Aisling is currently working as a National Specialist for Family Support with the HSE's Children and Families Social Services. Over the past two years she has been working to encourage the development of Children's Services Committees within the HSE, in conjunction with the *Office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA)*. So I am now going to hand the morning over to Aisling. Thank You

Conference Papers

Morning Session

Introduction and Chair : Dr. Aisling Gillen, National Specialist Family Support, Children & Families Social Services, HSE

Good morning everyone, I am delighted to be here today. It was looking a bit dicey with the weather earlier in the week so I think that this Conference is particularly blessed. I was reflecting on this last night. What kind of a glimmer happened with the weather that we all managed to get here today? There must have been some special reason for the weather to have broken to ensure that we got here so this must be for all of us a huge opportunity to network, to learn and to really enjoy the 10th Anniversary experience of the Teen Parents Support Programme. Personally from a HSE perspective, who by and large finance the Teen Parents Support Programme, I would consider it to be, as Margaret said, huge value for money. Every penny that goes into that Programme goes into frontline support for young people and their children and I think that is a hugely impressive Programme in that regard and certainly, in the regard of it being good value for money, our intention is to support the continued progress and development of that Programme going forward.



Dr. Aisling Gillen
National Specialist Family Support
Children & Families Social Services, HSE

So it is my pleasure now today to introduce you today to Professor Pat Dolan. Professor Pat Dolan is joint founder and Director, as all of you know, of the Child and Family Research Centre in NUIG and a joint founder of the Masters in Family Support here in Galway. He has twenty years of experience in research, as a frontline worker, residential care worker, service manager, academic and a huge interest in the development of early intervention and family support. In October 2008 he was appointed as the first UNCESO Chair for Children, Youth and Civic Engagement here in NUI Galway and this particular chair delivers a comprehensive programme of work with the objective of promoting active citizenship, expertise, learning, training, policy and the development of good practice.

Pat is going to speak today about teen parenthood and Pathways to Coping so I want to introduce Pat to you now.

Teen Parenthood: Pathways to Coping

Professor Pat Dolan – UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement and Director of the Child and Family Research Centre of NUI, Galway

Good morning everybody. It is great to see a lot of familiar faces here including Chris Sheridan who I believe still has my football boots from many years ago. It is, as Aisling said, good that we all managed to get here. We live in interesting times as the Chinese would say, certainly at the moment, so in many ways it is very timely that there is a 10th Anniversary celebration for what I think is an incredibly important intervention, the Teen Parents Support Programme.

What I am going to do with you today (and just to say I have my mobile phone with me not because I am ringing anybody but because I don't have a watch) given the fact that there are teenage parents and many people that work on the frontline in the audience you will know a lot more about teenage parenting than I do, just to acknowledge that at the beginning. So, I thought it would be useful to try and look at four things. We will look at key positive outcomes for teenage parents and Margaret quite rightly talked about the importance of outcomes, so we will look at that. I also want to talk about types of timing and temperatures of social support because I think it is crucial to coping and crucial to successful teen parenting. I want to raise the suggestion to you that I don't think has been thought about enough, that is the idea of viewing teen parents as resilient civic actors that need to be valued and I will explain what I mean by that. Then I have a kind of Jamie Oliver version of what we know about coping mechanisms. The thing about Jamie Oliver, as any of you who have got a Jamie Oliver cookbook know, when you take it out of the oven it never looks like what it does on the cover of the book. Good practice should be like that, so I am going to come back to that as well. I also want to give you a little bit of personal perspective, not much, but I certainly do want to make a plea, and I am sorry the Minister is not here and couldn't make it, but I certainly do want to make a plea for the long haul for family support and this is a great example of effective family support.

So, it is interesting if you take the issue of teen parenting and stand back from it for a moment. Louis Pasteur, who was famous for being a Nobel Prize winner of course, was also

famous for having developed the vaccine for rabies, anthrax and of course pasteurised milk that comes from his name. I am also in deep gratitude to him as he also developed a thing that pasteurised red wine that he is less famous for. At the time he was living in Paris and a lot of people were dying and there was a crisis, a bit like arguably the childcare system can be ostensibly in Ireland. He argued very strongly for prevention and he argued very strongly for investment and long-term investment in prevention. His idea was that you don't think about it just as cause and cure. He actually used the term 'strengths perspective' in medicine and he emphasised that you look to find what makes you strong and what you can add in terms of other medicine. I was reminded of this lately when I bumped into someone who I was in school with in Brunswick Street in Dublin. People often say, '*who was in your class?*' and actually a very famous gang man was. I won't go into the details of it but he went on to be a very famous member of a gang and I remember that we used to have a joke when we were learning about pasteurised milk, we used to have a saying '*past your eyes*'. Well I learned the hard way that you did not crack a joke with that person but this is to do with perception and I want to talk a bit about perception in a moment - which I think is important.

I suppose as a key starting point, we need to acknowledge the power of informal support from parents, family, their friends and other teen parents because they are actually the key actors in teen parenting and I am going to show you the extent of this. The other thing that I am going to do is acknowledge the importance of programmes like the Teen Parents Support Programme and the fact that people like Sheila and others in this room had a vision in Galway ten years ago to develop the project. I would make the argument that family support and support in teen parenting is a human right and in fact in UNESCO and the UN and with UNICEF we are looking at the articles for the whole issue of family support as a human right as much as protection, which I think is interesting. I think regardless of the economy and regardless of how we view the childcare system in Ireland we have to remember that family support is a human right and I would argue very very strongly for that apart from the fact that the evidence base that it works is very strong.

The other thing I wanted to mention from the outset is that there are what has been described as 'labelling myths' around teen parenting and the assumption that it is a difficulty or the assumption that it is a hardship. Now it can be difficult and it can contain elements of hardship but it is not the home station of it. The other label that we need to be careful of is the suggestion that anyone who is a teen parent or a child of a teen parent will have worse outcomes in life. There is no evidence to show that whatsoever and it is interesting. I spoke

at a conference in Waterford a number of years ago (and I won't name the person and I won't name the conference) but I spoke at this conference where an academic got up and suggested that if you are from a large family, if you are from a one parent family if you are from a disadvantaged area and if you were below the correct birth weight, these were all the factors that predict poor outcomes in later life. Now, I got up to speak after this person and I said: *'I am the youngest of 12, my father died when I was seven months old, I am from a part of Manor Street where you had to look over your shoulder and I don't like microwaves'*. I was seven weeks premature and was less than three pounds when I was born and I spent the first three months of my life in an incubator. This is why I don't allow a microwave in my house because I think it is my mother. But my point is that this person got up ahead of me and was talking through his backside because you can't label outcomes for people in life. It doesn't work like that. I work in social science and that is the reality.

What we do know is that the kinds of difficulties in teenage parenting centre around two things happening at the same time. That is the teenager's own development in adolescence combined with becoming a mother and father. They are the two things that are going on and the coping mechanisms for these are key.

Research work done by Natasha Cabrera in the States has looked a lot at what influences our parenting and the evidence indicates that girls are influenced by their experience of their mothers, more than boys are influenced by the experiences of their fathers. One of the suggestions that she makes in her research is that fatherhood needs to be more outward and we need to capture more ways of learning from our fathers that are positive. Now it is interesting because as I said to you I am a father of three children and my father died when I was seven months old so I have no experience of being fathered. I had older brothers who protected me, but that was a different thing and I often wonder am I a good Dad because I have no knowledge of being fathered. So it is interesting, in a way, that if you think of being a teen parent you think of your own experience from your father and to what extent that influences you and it is interesting that that is one of the stronger pieces of evidence in research.

The other thing I wanted to talk about is my stance on perception. How you perceive an event is incredibly important. So if you take the recent snow a lot of people were seeing it as something to fear. These are images of the snow. There is that kind of image of the snow (car crashed in snowy ditch) and then there is this kind of image of the snow (children

sledging). The second one is much nicer than the first but it is still the same snow, it is still the same item and I think you can look on the challenge of teen parenting like that crashed in or you can look at it like this. It is just the way we think about it but here is probably something in the middle as well if you thought about it.

Okay, here are some myths I want to get rid of. Charlie Bruner's work in the States discovered that 50% of young people who have got difficulty in their lives never come near services and still do very well. They never see a professional and he included in that 70% of teen parents in America. This is really interesting because it demonstrated that natural networks kicked in, like aunts, uncles, grannies, neighbours and friends or whatever the system was. So that is the power of networks-which tends to get overlooked. The second myth I want to get rid of is... how many people in the room in your adolescence did something that you shouldn't have? put up your hand everyone and if you didn't put up your hand it is a bit late now. (Well, for some of us anyway, I have a daughter who tells me every day I am still in my adolescence). The point is that only 15-18% of people in their adolescence have a difficulty and this idea that adolescence is rife with people in difficulty is untrue. The evidence from John Coleman and Leo Hendry's work (they have done extensive research over thirty years) is that less than 15% of teens in the UK and Ireland and between 15% and 18% in the United States and Australia have a difficulty. And here is what is more important, 90% of that 15% just age out of the problem. You actually just grow up. You don't need any intervention. What is also interesting is that Leo Hendry has suggested that teen parenting can have a positive effect on development. I worked in childcare and becoming a parent certainly affected the way I did my work in a positive way. So I am just debunking some myths there.

I do think, however, that there is an issue of programme risk around early intervention generally. A lot of the things that are being talked about as new-fangled programmes have actually been around in various forms for very many years and they are just being rehashed. I am going to call it 'new skins for the old ceremony'. There is a risk that you can end up having robotic workers and I am very heartened, and I am sure it is true, that Margaret was talking about the quality of workers in the TPSP. Everybody in the room revolves around relationships, you don't revolve around 'programmes' and I say this with the greatest respect to Atlantic Philanthropies. I am very happy to receive their funding and to work with them and to receive their support but there is a risk with 'programme implementation' that you can lose good practice. You need good practice and it would be one thing that I would say very

strongly to the Teen Parents Support Programme is that you have a good Programme. Don't fall for the mistake of thinking that there is a better one in Australia or America to replace it. You might need to tweak it and change it but it sounds to me like you have a pretty good Programme. There needs to be (and I say this because I know that these are the exception rather than the rule because of people like Sheila and Mary McMahon who roped me into doing this) and I know there is a very good strong relationship with the HSE and this Programme but it is very important that the relationship between the community, voluntary and the state sector is looked after, particularly now that things are getting tighter. My overall point is that in terms of supporting teen parents to be parents it is crucially important that we remember the centrality of relationships. It is probably the most crucial thing I can say and I mean that by of the relationship between professionals and those they work with.

What Erica Frydenberg has suggested - which brings us on to coping - is that teen parenting can either have a positive or negative effect on the person over time and how much time is an important question. There is the initial crisis of discovering that you are to be a teen parent, the initial period of coming to terms with that and obviously the birth and so forth but it is this happening over time. That is the important factor. A lot of people talk about coping and resilience as a turning point and Michael Ungar's work suggests that teen parenting can actually be a positive turning point that can develop skills, confidence and coping capacity. There is however the risk that it can be a burden and for some people, the burden can be negative, so this is not all a happy story. For some people, parenting can be a burden anyway regardless of age. Some people just don't make good parents, aren't ready to be parents and you can have it going to ruination and they are the two polar effects of resilience as a fulcrum. This is a photograph from the Irish Times of the floods in Pakistan. (A photo of two women wading through water with a baby and their belongings on a makeshift float). I have just come back from a special meeting in Paris on Haiti last week and one of the reasons people died in Haiti was because of the structures of the buildings, they didn't stand up to the earthquake and what is interesting in this photograph in Pakistan is the women trying to take children across a river on a float with the food beside it. We all rightfully fund initially after a disaster but people in Pakistan and Haiti will still need money next year and it won't even be on the radar because something else will have replaced it. It is very important that we remember that it is not just 'crisis' attention that we have to give in teen parenting but maintenance supports, the day in day out, Monday to Friday, bad weather, good weather, have a cold all the stuff that you know better than I do that is important.

So there is a strong emphasis on providing the services for teen parenting through interventions. So there are things you do, outputs that come from you doing it and outcomes which are about 'impact' and 'does it make a difference?'. Now it is very important that we understand the difference between outputs and outcomes. They are two different things. What we do know from the literature in terms of social capital is that there is 'getting by' and 'getting ahead'. Getting by is bonding capital and getting ahead is bridging capital. Obviously what you are looking for in a Programme like the Teen Parents Support Programme or any programme that supports teen parents is to enable both the teen parent and their children over time to get ahead. The evidence suggests that a strong factor in successful interventions is connectiveness, that there is engagement and connectiveness with the teen parent. In terms of outputs, a crucially important form of support is concrete support or practical support and evidence shows that advice support is not as useful as concrete support. We will come back to that slightly as well.

Recent research has shown that support where it is provided and it is hidden is much more effective than just support that is provided. So support that you don't even realise that you are getting is the most effective because you don't feel bad the next day, you don't feel beholden to somebody else. One of the strong things in the movement of social support is to create more ways of providing hidden support and I think that is really important in providing support in teenage parenting. In terms of outputs you want to go from coping to life improvement. That is what you want to go for, not just getting by, but actually having a positive outcome in life the same as anybody else should have. This is bound by maximum social support (which is crucially important), reciprocity (which is where the teen parent gives support back) as well as the type and timing of support which I will talk about.

If you look at the menu for building resilience towards prevention, you have to look at service orientation. A very basic part of a service is that it is needs centred and you might assume that is always the case, that people who use the service and their needs are the central task of the service but it is not always the case. There are services where the services' status or the staff's view of the service goes ahead of the needs of service users so it is crucial to have a needs centred approach.

What is also crucially important in resilience is this idea of social ecology. A lot of the work on resilience (for example, Michael Rutter's early work) talked about this idea of building up resilient traits in somebody so that you can overcome the odds. The view is that yes, you can

build that up in the individual but you also have to work with the persons social ecology including their family, friends and neighbours, taking the wider approach. There is also the suggestion that you use an assets base. Some of the work done by Peter Benson on developmental assets is this idea that you have 40 assets to get by in life. As a teenager you need 14 at a minimum and you can have up to 40. What we do know about needs centred services is that anybody who uses them feels that they have at least one reliable alliance in the service that they can turn to, that they can name and know and that they feel embedded in their community. I think this is crucially important.

Robbie Gilligan looks at this idea of success in hobbies as a key factor in resilience. I said to Robbie lately that if you turn on RTE 2 any Saturday to watch a movie at about 6pm there is usually a good old resilience story about a hockey team who suddenly decided that they have it in them to win. There are so many movies (like Billy Liar) where there is something about a hobby or a success or a sport in it.



Professor Pat Dolan, NUIG

I am really interested in the idea of teen parents as positive actors for youth because of their experience and because of the knowledge they gain and I want to come back to this idea of civic action. What is really important and is demonstrated in Axel Honneth's work is about respect and recognition; it is a hugely important factor in teen parenting. The new sociology of childhood suggests that we should support teen parents and young people for today because we don't just rear our children - and teen parents don't just rear their children - for themselves as families, we rear our children for society. That is what our global mission is and there is overwhelming evidence that the first people to go in and help in disasters are youth. We know this from 9/11, from the Tsunami and Haiti and actually from hurricane Katrina as well. In fact I was talking at the inaugural lecture here and the press officer here (and I know she does not mind me saying it) was trapped in the Tsunami and was saved by two twelve year old girls and they looked after her for four days. So the notion that youth are not civic actors is a myth. In fact, often and what happened in 9/11 is that when the emergency services came they pushed youth aside. So what I am saying is that there is an innate capacity in youth to care and to provide action which is an important element in parenting. One of the reasons I am really interested in that kind of altruistic view of youth is the

argument that by helping other people, and that includes by being a parent, you actually benefit yourself and you actually feel better. So looking at youth as recipients is not a good way of thinking about it.

I want to give you a really good example of this. My girlfriend there is a nun. She is Sister Molly from Tipperary (Photo of speaker with nun and small child in Africa). I was in Zambia for a month earlier in the year and the child on the right is Dee Dee. Sister Molly is from Tipperary and she has been working in Western Zambia for the past 25 years. Western Zambia is a place with nothing and what is really interesting is that I came across many teen parents when I was there. In fact most of the parents were teen parents and most of them were parenting children who weren't their own. Most of them weren't even related to the children they were parenting and they were parenting very effectively. Due to HIV/AIDS a lot of people are dying in rural parts of Africa. It is worse in Zimbabwe than it is in Zambia now but Sister Molly said that out of desperation she had to get what she called a 'fleet' of teen parents together for the children to survive. It is amazing and quite humbling to watch how they parent kids who are not their own so there is a huge amount of evidence that this works. Dee Dee is a very interesting story (I have used one where her face is covered for recognition purposes) but what is interesting about her story is that you will see children like her going around parenting other children. It is quite amazing and it is a very good success story, done on practically no money.

So what are the things that create resilience and coping in teen parenting and in fact any type of parenting? Anne Masten talks about the 5 R's. You have responsiveness, relationship, reciprocity, ritual and routine. They are the key factors. Responsiveness is that you respond to people's needs and that they in turn respond to other people's need. Relationships are self-explanatory. Reciprocity is exchanging support not just receiving it and ritual is the ritual of things like birthday and Christmas being celebrated. You have routine, which is the Monday to Friday, the going to school and all the day-to-day things that Anne Masten talks about as 'the power of ordinary magic'. So all of us that are parents, if you think of the times you have given your child a lift somewhere you wouldn't be able to count them, you do it automatically, they are the things in parenting that work, it is not the once off event. They are important too but it's the everyday that works. The key thing in teen parenting terms is to ensure you have a secure base that you are operating from and you provide a secure base for your child. That is key to the relationship between resilience and social support. Serendipity (which is chance before we went metric) is important. Resilient teen parents are those who

can take opportunities that come their way and in Chicago they have done a lot of work in teen parenting. Rob Chaskin's work found that resilient teen parents come from resilient families and resilient communities so the relationship between the teen parent, the family and the community is key. Just as becoming a teen parent can be a chance event (as it often is) it can also, as Frydenberg said, aid coping is a very positive way.

The one thing we do know from the literature about parenting and being under stress in parenting is the centrality of having at least one reliable alliance. Research that John Canavan and Ciara Bradley did here in the Centre looked at parenting on your own and found that the crucial issue was having at least one reliable alliance that you can turn to and ask questions of, that is there for you and that you can depend on. It is a key factor in coping and at a very basic level, on any programme and with anyone you work with, there should be at least one reliable alliance, it is crucial. There are three types of support that we all get by on in the room and actually they are only ones that we get by on. They are tangible support (which is practical support), emotional support and advice support. Making sure that all those ships come in at the right time in supporting teen parents is what you do and I know it is what you do but it is key and making sure that you have buoyancy and balance between the types of support on offer is very important. What I mean by that is very often professionals offer buckets of advice when it is not what is needed. In other words, making sure that the types of support provided is the same as the type needed.

The second most important theme of support for teen parents is timing of support. If you think about how you time support for somebody who has bereavement, very often they get too much support at the start and too many people calling. It can be too much and six weeks later they are looking at the wallpaper and nobody is calling when it is needed. The same issues arise for teen parents. The assumption about teen parents and a lack of skills can be a false assumption. Sometimes teen parents are actually better at the physical skills of parenting so that might not be the support that they need. Somebody coming in a month after they have had their child to teach them something that they already know is actually useless. The other important 'T' is the 'thermostat' and I say this still being in my adolescence and hoping I never leave it. In the *'Eight Ages of Man'* Eriksson predicted (he was a big Elvis fan) and he predicted that you could always tell men who were still in their adolescence because they were still trying to look like they were Elvis when they were seventy. I am not going to look like Elvis but the point is that adolescence can be turbulent and you have the Thermostat Effect and what I mean by that is things going on and not being sorted out, a

crisis today that isn't a crisis tomorrow, all those issues which make up normal adolescence but when you put on top of that the burden of child rearing it can get a bit tricky. So being aware of that thermostat is an important part of the 'T' influence.

Apart from a reliable alliance, having closeness is important and sometimes we assume closeness in family relationships when we shouldn't. Not all families are close and not everybody is supportive, let's be blunt about it. Charlie Brunner talks about the innate human bond and once you have an innate human bond with someone there is nothing that a person *won't do* for you and if you don't have an innate human bond with someone there is nothing that they *will* do for you. That is the irony of it and we know that from family support. Part of my pension plan is all the brownie points that I have with my three kids and I hope to cash in on them someday. You need to endow positive relationships and it is very important to help teenage parents realise (what they probably know anyway) that what you invest in your kids is the best part of your pension plan that you can have in the future.

Michael Rutter very famously came up with eight things that you do to enable resilience in anybody. He wrote them in psychiatry language so I have tried to put them into normal speak. He talks about reducing sensitivity to risk should something happen and the reduction of risk after something happens. What I mean by this is that you look at risk as an issue and you put coping mechanisms in place and you try to reduce negative chain reactions so when one thing goes wrong it is not that everything has to go wrong. You know if you go to Weight Watchers and you go out and eat a curry and then you eat 5 curries for the next 5 days, the idea is you don't have to do that, you can actually get things right, you can pull back your 'points'. The same principles apply in parenting, just because you have one bad episode as a parent doesn't make you a bad parent. Everybody is under stress as a parent and that is part of being resilient, you can actually set things to go right. You can one-for-one compensate which is a really important part of being a resilient parent and we can all compensate. How often have we slapped bold table when your child bumped into a table? How often have you slapped bold television when the television didn't work? It is an incredibly important thing to do and think of the children who don't have someone to do that for them. It is an incredibly important part of parenting. Michael Rutter, by the way, doesn't describe it in the way I have just described it. Positive future planning in your life is important. How many of you came here today thinking that *'this day two weeks is Christmas Eve, I can't wait for Christmas'*. That is positive future planning and having positive future

planning is really important. Being able to reframe negative events into positive ones is actually quite difficult when you are under stress but it is important.

Believe it or not, the Teen Parents Support Programme was started by Charles Dickens! Now he didn't call it that but he did have a thing called the Urania Project in London near Chelsea soccer grounds and it was a programme for teen parents. Actually he was quite a philanthropist and the reason he did it was because he spent most of his childhood in workhouses because his father was either in debt or in prison. It is quite interesting and those of you that are involved in teen parenting should read a book by Anne Hartley on Charles Dickens as there is a chapter in it on the Teen Parents Support Programme in London in 1860! It ran for about 8 years so just to show you that the idea of supporting teen parents is nothing new. Now the idea of giving your last Rolo to someone you know (well actually it was about giving your last Rolo to someone you love) but as part of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in England, Joseph Rowntree used to give one of his sweets to a charity. There are twelve sweets in a packet of Rolos (and I know this because I like Rolos) but one actually went to the charity. He also funded a place called the Rolo Village in the north east of England and Channel 4 has done a documentary on this. He housed teen parents who were homeless and so forth. He was a Quaker and if you think of the negative orphanage regime of that time and teen parents who couldn't keep their children and teen parents who had to take very sad alternatives it is actually not that long ago in our history. I don't want to be negative but I feel very strongly that we should support parents in the community to survive and get by and do well for all the right reasons and all the good reasons. Not a million miles from here you had all the Magdalene Laundries and there are people here still going around Galway city talking about it very sadly. I am just raising it as a point rather than anything.

I am interested in this idea of civic engagement. If you think of a teen parent who like any parent loves their child and cares for their child and all of the other things that a teen parent does. If that teen parent does the same activity in a Foreign Youth Programme they would be seen as civic actors carrying out a civic action. I actually think that teen parenting should be seen as a civic action and seen in society as an important action. One of the things we do know from positive youth civic engagement is that you get social support, you get resilience and you get this idea of self-efficacy. Connie Flanagan's work has shown that young people through civic action (and I am saying that teen parenting should be viewed as civic action) get mastery to do things, get a better sense of belonging, gain independence and develop generosity in yourself so there are very positive outcomes from teen parenting. If you look at

the last one, we all know you can get confidence etc. but it is about building socially just societies and healthy democracies and I think that there is a wider issue that hasn't been taken on and that is civic engagement.

Civic engagement is often seen as political rather than social. What is interesting is that Alan O'Kelly and I did research on young carers and these kids are physically caring for their parents. It is actually parenting in reverse and it is so obvious the skills and capacity that they bring. Now there is the question about burden on them as children and there are costs. There are education costs and risks and there is personal cost but it is interesting. There is growing evidence on peer mentoring and peer education for example we are doing a lot of research on Big Brother and Big Sister mentoring for Foróige which is funded by Atlantic and I am really interested in the notion of mentoring and teenage parenting and how that could work. I know it is being done and I think it is an area that could be explored very positively because it does instil connectivity in family and communities.

One way of thinking about this overall is debit and credit in the book of coping. On the debit side you can have poverty as a risk and overburden of care giving. What is really interesting in adolescence and parenting is that it is not *having* the problem that is the problem; it is the problems *coming all at the same time*. Anybody can deal with one problem. It's what your mother taught you, "*fight the bees one at a time the way the monkey fought the bees*", it is when all of the bees come together that you go under. That is an incredibly important point I think, having low capacity and also having existing negativities that pre-date the birth in relationships or any other difficulties, they don't go away. For example, at funerals how often have you made up with somebody at a funeral for a short period? It is like a temporary cease fire but existing negatives do affect parenting. Of course they do. Having an education path and a career plan is incredibly important and the lack of it is also incredibly important. Having a key alliance as I said and having basic physical resources are important. Physical resources are key. Having the ability to parent, not everybody has the ability to parent regardless of their age. Some people are better parents than others. That is the reality of it but having a hopeful approach is key. So the overall key factors in coping (and we know this from Anne Masten's work on resilience) is having self-efficacy and an outgoing temperament, being female rather than male, social bonding with warm effective relationships and adults who set healthy standards around you and I don't mean that in a moralistic sense, I mean it in a wider sense. Creating opportunities for hopefulness and this idea that other people believe in you and believe that you can make it. Other people's belief

in you is as important as your belief in yourself. So if you are a teen parent and nobody believes you can make it, it is obviously going to have a negative effect and obviously the opposite applies.

Finally, the five C's, which are important, and I want to come back to the third one. The first one is having coping skills, the second one is having core capacity to parent and I am going to come back to current context. Caring, I know it is an obvious one but what is unsaid is dangerous and caring is important because with caring comes commitment. The current context is important because parenting changes. For example, fathering is changing hugely in Ireland. I certainly think it has changed. There are practices in parenting that our parents and our grandparents did that seem crazy now. I can remember (it is a different context) but I remember my son when he was about two, my mother was still alive and she was minding him in Dublin. My wife and I came back from being out somewhere and he had a coin sellotaped to his head when we came in. He had bumped his head and my mother's theory was that the coin pressed in the bump. Now you can think of why that wouldn't be good and funnily I came across it somewhere else recently. The point is that parenting changes and one of the things that can be difficult for teen parents is their own parents who think that the way they parented was the right way to parent and the way that you are parenting isn't the right way to parent. Well here is an advertisement and I wonder would you allow that advertisement now? This is an advertisement from the Irish Times in 1967, Santa having a fag. I thought I would put it in to get you all in a good Christmas humour! I finished up with social work students here last week and my advice to them was advice that I heard and I thought was great and that advice was actually to forget everything I told you because the most important thing is that if you love somebody and if you help somebody that is what is key. Thank you.

Dr. Aisling Gillen: Thanks, Pat, for that wonderful, warm and inspiring presentation. We have two more speakers and the process is that we will take some questions after that. So it is my pleasure now to introduce you to Sheila Lawlor. Sheila is Principal Social Worker in Galway University Hospital. She did her principal degree in UCD and also studied in Edinburgh University. She is a University Tutor with NUIG Galway; she also holds qualifications in loads of stuff, Family Law, Employment Law, Healthcare Management and Health Law. She has worked in a variety of jobs as a Child Care Worker with the Western Health Board, as a St Nicholas' Adoption Worker and has also work in medical research, foster care and as a generic social worker. She worked in Edinburgh University with

professor Trisiolitis (I knew I was going to get blocked on that!) the international authority on adoption tracing and she was a board member of Treoir for many years. Last year she was the Chair of the Allied Health Professionals Alliance here in Galway. So it is my pleasure to introduce you to Sheila Lawlor.



**Sheila Lawlor, Principal Social Worker,
University College Hospital, Galway**

The Importance of the TPSP to Health Services

Sheila Lawlor – Principal Social Worker, University College Hospital, Galway

Hello everybody. I think that Pat is an extremely hard act to follow so I just want to congratulate him. We got the scientific bit but I suppose at the end what I loved was the emotion and the caring.

I was listening to the radio on the way in today and Johnny Duhan was singing '*The Voyage*' and I don't know if any of you know it but it is basically that '*life is an ocean and that love is a boat and in troubled waters it keeps you afloat*' and I think that this is what the TPSP does. As you can see, I only have one slide because I thought I would like to talk through things and this is what the slide is. It is EQUAL. (Slide with the word EQUAL on it).

I have three sections to talk about. The first section is the history of the TPSP and how it came about. The second is about where we are now and I suppose the third section is just a little bit about where I would love to see the vision for the future and I would like to leave that with you.

I suppose EQUAL is the basis on which I want to go forward. The history of the projects came from, well I will tell you a bit about myself first. I worked as a Maternity Social Worker in the Maternity Hospital in Galway. I worked prior to that with an adoption society

and I suppose over the years I liked to move where I thought I was needed, it made me feel good. In the job I had in the hospital I saw lots of young mothers coming through the door expecting babies and the one thing I notice was their resilience and the feeling that they could manage it all and I thought: *“it is great to be young because you don’t see the negative things that may be coming around the corner to get you”*. I thought it was just wonderful. I then moved out of the Maternity Hospital and into the General Hospital and a lot of my referrals came from the emergency department. Over time I noticed a pattern developing of young parents coming into the hospital especially at the weekends and at night and their babies were being admitted for no other reason other than they had nappy rash or feeding problems. They were small issues where if they came from families with support their babies wouldn’t have been admitted. This was in 1998 and this is our 10th birthday so that would be right. Anyway, there was a pattern of these young babies coming in and they were placed in the paediatric unit where Mary (Mc Mahon) was the Senior. As a result they were picking up infections from ill babies, so the issue of quality arose. If you place a child in a ward that is full of sick children you are putting that child at a disadvantage right away. So, I was sitting at a dinner one night beside Frank Fahey who was the local TD at the time and the Junior Minister for Health and he said *“isn’t it great all of the services that we are providing for families”* and I said *“well actually, if you supported young families prior to the birth of their baby and after the birth you wouldn’t need to be spending eight hundred pounds (which at the time was the cost of an inpatient bed at a hospital) you wouldn’t need to be looking at taking children into care if you supported the ones who want to mind them”*. So he asked me to put together a proposal and I did a bit of research on the numbers coming through with the help of the social workers in the hospital in Galway. We then looked at how those parents could be supported. What it meant was using money, that was being spent anyway, on hospital admissions at an earlier stage to get better outcomes. And, if you want to look at outcome measurements, we haven’t had a social admission to Galway University Hospital of a teen parent’s child in the last ten years. So if you want to measure outcomes, it is a really good measurement.

Now, (I am inclined to wander a bit so I will have to look back down at my notes here) really, I just want to talk to you about the Teen Parents Support Programme and what it means to the health services. In the health service as you know at the moment- particularly hospitals where we are based- the demand is much greater than supply of services and the difficulty that we have at the moment is that everything is focused on what is the best use of

finance. Now, if anybody is ill in the room and you are admitted that is your need but, when you think of infants who are admitted just because their parents needs support, that is a really bad use of funding.

The definition of health from the World Health Organisation is that it is not the absence of illness but it is the ability to cope with the realities of daily living. So, if you think of health and supporting young parents to be healthy, you have to think in terms of education, giving those parents opportunities to get antenatal care early, giving them opportunities to see that maybe their children won't read as quickly if they are smoking during their pregnancy. (That isn't just for teenagers, that is for everybody). If you think of the quality of services that you want to provide, you want to provide a universal service -which is something you do. Every issue that arises for a young person you are there for them.

I think the biggest feature of the Teen Parents Support Programme that I have seen around the country, and in the Evaluation, is that people who are sincerely interested in the client that they are dealing with, no matter what the qualification of the service provider, they are the person who is going to make a success of that parent and child's life. The one thing that has been shown in mental health is that the relationship between the psychiatrist and the mentally ill person is the biggest predictor of success and I think you can apply exactly the same parameters to outcomes in the Teen Parents Support Programme. It is the relationship that you build and the fact that somebody knows that you are there for them no matter what the instance is and whatever their circumstances are. I have worked over the years with a lot of very ill people and very ill people would surprise you in the resilience that they have in the face of illness. You would be absolutely inspired by people who are going through very traumatic times and I think that one thing to note if you are a service provider for the TPSP. You should look at how the young people you are dealing with inspire you and look at what you are getting back from them because I think that will actually enrich your own life and you can learn from the strengths that you see in them. I have never met any young person who didn't want to be the best parent they could be and I suppose that the service providers that I meet, you are like *'the wind beneath their wings'* as the song says.

Okay, I feel I am a bit over the shock now! I was coming in this morning and I was listening to Lyric FM and there was an advert that says that every person can face a crisis, it is the day to day living that really gets people. I think that sometimes services are really great at being there when there is a crisis but I think it is the routine, the really dull day, the baby crying,

how would I describe it? It is the routine of life that people need help with. You see it in the bad weather that we have had and the elderly people coming into the hospital and it's the mundaneness, it is the fact that nobody calls and that you are on your own. Think of all the controversy there was when Shannon Airport was due to be shut and the issue that the whole region was going to lose connectivity with Europe and America. Well, if we think of it on a human level, if you are going to be disconnected, that in itself make you disconnected from others, it makes you disconnected from your child and it is very isolating. Young people especially hate being disconnected and I think if you watch any teenager they love being in touch with their pals, so connectivity is important.

When I worked in social work at the beginning I was very conscious of unmarried parents as they were called then. I was very conscious that they lived in fear of the views of others, of being judged by other people and I think that sometimes people assume that if you are a teenager that you are not going to be a good parent. I think that sometimes services can feed into that assumption as well and I think that it is an awfully dangerous assumption to have. It is like a grandparent isn't good enough to mind a child because they are too old or because you are in a wheelchair you are not going to be a good telephonist. There are assumptions that we all make and we have to be careful that we do not hold to those assumptions. I read recently and I thought it fitted this meeting that we all live in fear of being judged by others while the empty space between us is waiting to be filled with a simple gesture of honest caring and I think that fits in with what Pat was saying earlier.

I don't think I am going to go on much longer but just to say that this is the 10th Birthday of the Teen Parents Support Programme and I am really honoured to be working with my team here in Galway and the teams from around the country. I am really honoured that this lovely, healthy happy looking group here are carrying the baton and have carried it successfully for 10 years. I hope that in the Programmes some of the teenagers, who would now be a little bit older will be employed, because I think a young parent knows what other young parents need better than me. I was disappointed to hear that Charles Dickens had thought up the Teen Parents Support Programme because we thought in Galway that we were very avant garde!

Finally, I want to say that from my experience it is the passion and the interest of the staff that has made a success of a lot of young parents' lives and that is I think the tribute that you should give yourselves. I think that the 10th Birthday is a big celebration and I think that it is

fitting that it is the 10th of December 2010 and I think that it is really fitting that this meeting is back in Galway. Thank you.

Dr. Aisling Gillen: Sheila, thank you very much. It was such a pleasure to listen to you talk and I think when you hear a practitioner with that level of skill talk with such an element of reflective practice (which I know that Pat espouses through all of his practices) I sat back and I thought this is somebody who has sat back and has thought deeply about their practice and who has adopted that whole caring, academic approach to work which is wonderful to have listened to. So thank you very much Sheila.

I am now going to introduce you to Marie and Ashley Keenan. They are from Dublin and they are going to give you the perspective of a family who has been users of the Teen Parents Support Programme. I am not going to give you a lengthy introduction to Marie and Ashley because I think that what they are going to say to us will be hugely inspiring.

A Family's Perspective

Marie and Ashley Keenan

Marie Keenan

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Marie Keenan and I am the mother of a teenage daughter and I am grandmother to her daughter Madison, now 20 months. Our story began over 2 years ago when Ashley was 18 at the time and in first year of college. She came home one evening and told myself and my husband that she was expecting her baby. Our world at that moment was turned upside down. People often use the expression '*pulling the rug from under your feet*' but this news was like having the floor pulled from under our feet.

We as parents were devastated; news of this magnitude was never expected. All your hopes and dreams for your child have been wiped away in those three words "*I am pregnant*". When the teenage daughter is going through school, life with them can be difficult enough as they progress from being a teenager to adulthood. As you are aware teenagers encounter many difficulties but when you add pregnancy to this problem life for your teenage daughter will change forever. As parents of three children we were fully aware of the magnitude of raising a child. All of the problems that can be encountered including nurturing, caring and of course the financial implications like clothing them and feeding them as well as all the

other needs of the baby. How on earth was our teenage daughter going to cope with such a huge task at such a tender age?

I would like first to take you through our first week after being told by our daughter that she was expecting her first baby. You have as a parent a whirlwind of emotions. You find it difficult to cope with your day to day living and you don't have time to wallow in self-pity as your main concern is your daughter's well-being, both physical and mental, and of course your daughter's unborn baby. You, as a parent, can't sleep or eat and rational thinking goes astray. Our minds were jumping around like beach balls as we jumped from the present to the future for both our teenage daughter and her unborn baby. We, as parents, had a modest but comfortable lifestyle and we were now in uncharted waters. We believed we could roll the wagons around in a circle and cope as best we could. After the second week, a local community nurse suggested to us that maybe Ashley would like to contact the group called the Teen Parents Support Programme. Neither we nor our daughter had ever heard of such a body. Our daughter discussed the group with us. We pondered about what type of group they would be and what could they do for us. We discussed at length the pros and cons of contacting such a group.

We, as I stated earlier, are a private type of family. By that I mean we don't like to approach anyone outside of our close relatives for assistance or help. So here we were very reluctant to approach this Programme but, like all the other times during our daughter's pregnancy, we realised that this decision was not about us or for us and this was one of the most valuable lessons that we were to later learn from the Teen Parents Support Programme. This was a decision that was to be undertaken by our daughter as a young mum to be. When you are a parent of a teen mum you keep slipping back into the role of parent and decision maker and you forget that all of the decisions made regarding your daughter and her future are hers solely. Yes, you can give advice but the ultimate decisions should be made by your daughter. As I said, before my daughter contacted the Teen Parents Support Programme we discussed what type of group they would be, why they were named this and what it would be like. We had no idea. Would they be a religious group? would they be voluntary? or as my husband said would they be a group of 'nosey parkers'? Knowing what the Programme is now I apologise!

My daughter Ashley, with some reluctance, decided she would contact the Programme. Initial contact was first made by phone and shortly after a house visit was arranged. Shortly

before the visit, my husband and I discussed what sort of support the Programme could offer and we discussed the prospect of allowing outside influences into what we deemed as our problem. These were our genuine concerns at the time and we also realised that our own personal pride should not stand in the way of our daughter getting extra help in addition to our own. We, as a family, were not aware of how immense this help would be.

I was present at the first meeting in my home between my daughter and Esther from the Teen Parents Support Programme. Firstly, at my daughter's request for moral support, and, secondly, to prove my husband's 'nosey parker' theory wrong! The introduction to the Programme by Esther was presented in such an informative way that it not only put my daughter at ease but had her very eager to avail of the Programme. Our fears, misunderstanding and personal pride were also put aside. After a number of house visits and telephone calls my daughter Ashley felt more than confident to confide any issues she had in Esther. My husband, due to his shift patterns in work was also able to join in some of the home visits and we both agreed how wrong we were in our ideas or what this Programme entailed. We discovered that we now had better communication regarding our daughter's needs and we were more aware of our daughter's fears and issues around becoming a teen mum. When you are parents of a teenage mum you can become so caught up in your own fears and worries that you often forget that the most important person is your daughter and the unborn child. Again this adjustment was down to the excellent discussions with Ashley's mentor, Esther.

We also saw the potential that this Programme could offer for our daughter, Ashley, to realise her ambition to finish her college education and become self-reliant. We have seen our daughter become more confident as a person and we in turn gained confidence in her ability to manage her future. Both during and after the birth of our granddaughter, the support given to ourselves as parents of a teen mum was invaluable. Without this support the outcome would have been somewhat different. By different I mean that in all probability our daughter would have dropped out of college, become reliant on her parents and we all would have ended up in a vacuum. We are on a modest income and could never by ourselves have solely funded Ashley's college fees, crèche fees and the other financial supports provided by the TPSP. In addition to this, the emotional, psychological and confidence building support cannot and should not be underestimated. As a parent you can help, but on this long road with our daughter we would not have achieved most of these objectives without the

professionalism of the TPSP. We have seen the transition from a bewildered, nervous and frightened teen mum into a more confident teenage mum who has clear views of her future and that of her child. We have seen massive changes in our daughter's outlook on the problems she encounters and the problems that will arise in the future. This TPSP had given her the confidence and skills to confront these problems in a clear, conscious and mature manner and the Programme has also given her the best possible chance in life to educate herself to her fullest potential.

In a world where education is the most important thing in ensuring the future of her and her child, the Programme has assisted her in this and with independent living, like how to budget her income on a weekly basis. Things like electricity and shopping bills, all of which were alien to our daughter when she was living at home as a teenager. We are still slightly embarrassed at the thoughts that we had at the early stage of our daughter's introduction to the TPSP as we are now fully aware of the immense value and support that the Programme has given to not only our daughter but to all of us as a family. We shudder to think what our lives would have been like had we not availed of the Programme. We also spare a thought for those teen mums who, for whatever reason, have not had the chance to avail of this fantastic Programme. We are not the first and certainly will not be the last parents of a teen mum and we are proof of the Programme's success and recognise the important role it can play in so many lives of future teen mums.

Finally, when we were asked to speak about the Programme we could not let go of the opportunity to thank Esther, not only on behalf of my daughter, but on behalf of my husband and myself. Esther, your professionalism, knowledge and support to us was of immense importance and the out-of-office calls and texts that you took when things went astray were greatly appreciated. So once again, we would like to say a big '*thank you*' to all the staff of the Teen Parents Support Programme.

Thank you very much.



**Marie and Ashley Keenan,
Dublin West TPSP**

Ashley Keenan

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Ashley Keenan and I am a teen mum. My story begins in October 2008 when I was your average teenager. I had just finished my debs and my Leaving Cert and I was in college and dying for the social nights. Then, bang, I was sitting in the bathroom staring at a positive symbol. I never hated maths as much as I did that day! I felt nauseous, shocked and panicked. A million thoughts ran through my mind as I thought “*why me? How on earth am I going to tell my parents?*”? I never even took into account how I was going to look after this child. My parents were devastated. I remember standing in my dad’s arms crying and he kept saying to me ‘*you can’t have a baby, you are my baby, you can’t have a baby*’. I was devastated that I had let them down, but at the same time I was devastated I had let myself down. I tried my best to continue life as I had before and I got up each morning to go to college unaware to anyone outside my family that I was pregnant.

I came home one day and my mum handed me a leaflet about the Teen Parents Support Programme. I felt if I became part of the Programme I would become categorised and I would be judged. I just didn’t want to become a part of it. Then after much deliberation, I dialled the number and spoke to the TPSP for the first time. The voice on the other end didn’t seem so shocked that I was eighteen and pregnant and I was told a support worker would contact me. The day came for me to meet my support worker and I was anxious and nauseous but then Esther, my support worker to be, arrived. She was patient, friendly and understanding and it made me feel better about the situation I found myself in. The first session was a lot more relaxed and helpful than I thought it would be.

Over time and with regular visits I built up a relationship with Esther and she showed me options and advised me to decide what I wanted for myself and my unborn baby. With the advice and support for the TPSP, I continued to attend college but, due to the premature birth of my daughter, I missed my final exams and I was really upset that I had missed them. Having a baby when you are a teenager is difficult but having a baby in an intensive care unit is devastating. However, with the support and the advice of the TPSP I came out stronger and prepared for motherhood. I finally got home to my parents’ house and it wasn’t easy knowing what to do. The days and nights blended together, the feeds, my daughter wouldn’t sleep so I couldn’t sleep too. Of course my family helped a lot, but the advice from the TPSP and from Esther helped a lot.

Esther and I spoke a lot about my future. I wanted to return to education but wasn't sure how to do this now that I have a young baby to consider. I believed it was out of my reach. After speaking to Esther, I believed I could return to education with the support of the TPSP. I returned to college the following September when my daughter was four months old. I have since been studying for a Diploma in Childcare and Education and I hope to progress on to become a primary school teacher, become totally independent from social welfare, buy a home for myself and my daughter and raise her to the best of her potential.

In August 2010, I felt it was time for me to move out of the family home. Although my family were a great support, my dad giving my daughter midnight feeds when I was trying to get her off them was not the help I needed! I discussed my thoughts with Esther from the TPSP and once again she supported my decision to do this. I now live in rented accommodation with my daughter and the TPSP also help me to budget for things I had never thought about like ESB and bill payments.

Although I parent my daughter alone, she has some contact with her father. I believed that it was extremely important for my daughter to have contact with both of her parents. I believe a child should have a right to contact both parents as well. The TPSP helped me to arrange access and supported me in my wishes for my daughter, and although her father has minor involvement with the TPSP, I believe their support with the access helped them to build a relationship together.

My daughter is 1 year and 7 months and will be 2 years in April. She attends crèche on a full time basis for me to complete my education and we live in rented accommodation. My daughter, although premature, has developed cognitively and physically and has reached all her developmental milestones so far. Without the TPSP, I would not be in education and I would most likely be dependent on social welfare for the rest of my life due to the lack of education and being a parent at such a young age. With a large input from the crèche, she has developed physically and intellectually, her language skills are above average and she has developed social and emotional skills. Sometimes I think where my daughter and I would be if it hadn't been for the advice and support of the TPSP. After all that they have done for my daughter and me, I am most grateful to the TPSP and my own living guardian angel, Esther Pugh.

Questions & Answers

Dr. Aisling Gillen: I have to say that was just a wonderful presentation on the 10th Anniversary of the Teen Parents Support Programme and I think a warm congratulations are in order to all in the Teen Parents Support Programme for how inspirationally Marie and Ashley have talked about their own personal experience. And ‘well done’, Ashley, and best of luck to you and your family in the future.

We will take questions now from the floor for a couple of minutes. Does anyone have any burning questions that they would like to ask?

Question 1

Pat, you made a comment about males having less resilience than females. I would just be interested in your thoughts on why that is and whether there is any particular way in which the Teen Parents Support Programme should be working with young men to address this?

Response - Pat Dolan

Now the evidence is thin on this. It is from Michael Ungar’s work and he was involved in the International Resilience Project. So the evidence comes from that Project. The evidence is not that it is because you are male or because you are female. It is not that it is genetic. It may be social. I suppose in a joking way you could say that women tend to be more practical than men and tend to see practical solutions and I think there may be an element of that. The argument for one of the reasons that it might be like that is that men don’t use emotional literacy enough and that this has occurred over generations. I was talking to someone I work with and he was telling me that his father never told him that he loved him. Now he wasn’t complaining about it, it was just a fact. So there may be historical reasons for it and I think an anthropologist may have a view that it is over many generations. I think that one of the arguments is that we need to give skills to boys and girls growing up that maybe we don’t think of, and these are emotional skills. We look after writing and reading and all those things. We also look at things like turn taking and those kinds of social skills but we don’t give enough attention to emotional skills and listening skills. But, like I said, the evidence is thin.

Question 2

I think that Marie and Ashley have touched on my question. I have, on occasion, met with young parents. I am a school chaplain, a lay chaplain, and one of the things I would like to ask

is the balance between support and challenge. My experience has been that the mother of the girl will be very, very supportive and as Marie said realising that you had to stand back and the decisions for the child were those of her daughters. In some cases perhaps that doesn't happen, especially when the young girl is smack bang in the middle of second level education. Mum often steps in. To what extent would the Teen Parents Support Programme address that? Or does it address it in order to support the grandparent to be a good grandparent and to allow the young parent to meet the challenge of being a good parent?

Response - Marie Keenan

To be honest with you, I don't think we would have been able to organise ourselves the way we did. We were devastated, we were very angry; I mean it wasn't just that we put our arms around our daughter and we were delighted. We were devastated and then when we realised how angry we were and how upset Ashley was. I mean I couldn't look at her. I don't mean that in a bad way. I was just so upset. So I decided one day that something has to happen, somebody is going to have to talk to her. I knew deep down that even though I thought she was too young, she was a woman and this might be her only chance to have children but it was very hard to get that across to Daddy. So I think I had to counsel him for a long time and make him realise that it was her decision. So then when we spoke to the community nurse and she put us in touch with the Programme, we were able to speak to each other civilly and put us at a level where it was not me demanding her to do something. So I think that is what we learnt from the TPSP.

Question cont.

I realise what you are saying, but I suppose what I am getting at is not the time of the realisation that your daughter is pregnant. I will give you an example of a student I have in the school who is in 4th year and has a baby. I called to the family and they were very supportive, they were great. Sometime later I was speaking to the girl to see how she was getting on and she was saying that her mum is going out and getting the cot and buying the things and that the young girl just happens to be there. So to what extent does the teen parent support programme help the grandparents to understand their position?

Response- Marie Keenan

Oh, sorry. They tell you to butt out and take your position! Yes, that is where I had to be told that we were becoming the grandparents and I had to be reminded a lot that we were the *grandparents* and not the parents.

Response – Tracey Skerrett, Project Worker, Ballyfermot TPSP

I work in the Teen Parents Support Programme and part of our role is enabling the young person to be able to manage that for themselves within the family home. You are right. Even though grandparents think they are doing the best for the child, it's around supporting the young parent to be independent and rather than being the young parent's voice, working with them to have a voice, to be able to challenge because change will only happen then.

Question 3

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Margaret, Margot and all her team. It's a great celebration and I am delighted to be here with you on your 10th Anniversary. This is a question for Sheila. I suppose we would empathise with you to a certain extent in the Lifestart Project because the TPSP seems like such a wonderful Programme and yet you mentioned earlier, there are only 11 in Ireland. Sheila, I am just wondering what ideas you have for getting a Programme in every region in the country and in terms of national development that are the steps that need to be taken to get this message across?

Response Sheila Lawlor

Thank you for the question because I had a card written here for 'the vision for the future' but I forgot to mention it earlier as I got a bit nervous. I suppose because of the society we live in now everything will be about 'value for money'. I think that one of the best ways to continue this programme nationally and offer it to every teenager in the country is (and I think Margaret is involved in collecting information in a database) to have factual information that will indicate that it is a very good use of finance and that ultimately it will get people off the social welfare system. Secondly, and an issue which is really important, is that it will show that there are health benefit outcomes with regard to hospital admissions for children. I think it is going to boil down to money and I do think that every maternity hospital can offer it. The Galway branch is the only one based in a hospital, so it means that from the antenatal stage when somebody presents at the clinic until such time as their child is two they are

offered the service. In this way, at the early stage of pregnancy, it could be offered to everyone. Now, because the service is limited around the country, there is the issue of the urban and rural imbalance and in Galway we have two outreach projects in two towns in the county where parents can go. I suppose any development of the Programme would have to be seen as value for money and the only way you can show that is through research and statistics.

Question

This is a question for Pat. You mentioned hidden supports as being very effective and I am just wondering what you mean by that?

Response – Pat Dolan

I was just thinking there about the question about the grandparents doing everything. I have a relation who still goes around to his mother every Sunday because his mother still does mushy peas. That kind of thing stays with us a bit. An Irish guy called Bolger is doing some very interesting work in the States at the moment where they got somebody to donate support to somebody else. So I would go to you and give you support because you needed it and the next day they would interview you to see how you felt, your self-esteem, your outlook on life, your resilience, all those type of things. What happened immediately after being supported was that a lot of people didn't feel good because they knew they were beholden in some shape or form and they needed the help. They did the same activities with two people where one person gave the same form of support but they didn't physically give it, they virtually gave it. For example, a married couple who were out of work needed money for groceries. The sister of the married women gave money to her but on condition that the sister didn't tell her brother-in-law that she was the one who had given the money. So the husband did not know where the money came from. It was an 'anonymous' donation, and he felt okay about it. It is called the 'anonymous donating method'.

The point that I was trying to make is that I think there is tons of hidden support that we give in our daily lives. How often do you give a lift to someone and they say '*thanks*' but it only registers in a very small way. Can you imagine if you were in difficulty and you had to go to a person that you don't have a good relationship with and ask them for support? Or ask for money from a relation who really nags you about giving the money? The argument is that we should be tailoring support and I think the Teen Parents Support Programme does very low key services in a very good way.

Dr. Aisling Gillen

Okay I think we will draw the questions to a close and I am glad Pat that you explained that concept of hidden support a little bit more. I was quite intrigued by the concept when you put it up earlier. I am going to call on David Simpson who is going to prepare us for the Workshops.

Conference Workshops

Introduction by David Simpson, Facilitator and Co-ordinator of Promoting Fatherhood



**David Simpson,
Facilitator and Co-ordinator of Promoting Fatherhood**

There were two aims to the Conference. One aim was to *celebrate the work* of the Teen Parents Support Programme over the last 10 years and the second aim is to *share the expertise* that has been accumulated over the last 10 years. So some of the issues and the expertise have been touched on by Pat and by Sheila but by doing the Workshops you can actually hear about them from the people who have been doing the work.

So we have got the Workshops now until lunch time which is at one o'clock. I am hoping you all remember which Workshops you have been allocated to. If you don't, on your way out of the hall here there is a billboard and it has got the name of the Workshop, the room number and your name so if you are a little confused do check. To get to the Workshops you go straight down here, you turn right and then immediately left. All the Workshops are one long corridor so if you don't immediately see your Workshops carry on down.

So that people will get a chance to learn for other Workshops that they were not present at, there will be some feedback after lunch about some of the learning from the Workshops. Sinéad Foran is going to be writing up the Conference so she may pop into your Workshop to hear what is going on. We are trying to spread the expertise and the knowledge that has been built up over the last 10 years and get it out to you in different ways so enjoy your Workshops and see you back here after lunch.

Conference Papers

Afternoon Session

**Chaired by Rosemary Grant, Principal Social Worker,
Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital**

Hello everybody. Thank you for all coming back so promptly particularly with all the chat and networking that was going on over lunch. Just to start off this afternoon we have a surprise for you, which shows a different aspect of young people's lives. We have two young men here this evening, Carl and Robbie to do a rap for us.



**Rosemary Grant, Principal Social Worker, Coombe
Women and Infants University Hospital**

Robbie Coleman and Karl French from the Ballyfermot TPSP perform a rap.

Francis has just said '*follow that*' and I don't think I could! At the beginning I think Robbie was a bit confused and to whether he was Robbie or Karl and there is a particular reason why he was confused because today is his 21st birthday! I am neither a singer nor a rapper but I think a 'Happy Birthday' would be appropriate (at this point participants sang Robbie 'Happy Birthday' and presented him with a birthday cake). So on behalf of everybody and particularly on behalf of the TPSP, Happy Birthday to Robbie and thanks very much to the two of you.

Now, I think David you have to '*follow that*' because David Simpson is going to co-ordinate the feedback from the various Workshops. David is the co-ordinator of *Promoting Fatherhood*, has worked as trainer and has run a group for young mums with the Donegal TPSP.

Key Learning from Conference Workshops

David Simpson, Facilitator

This is going to be short and sweet, much like Robbie's cake! I am going to invite someone from each Workshop to come down and report their feedback to the Conference. So the first one is going to '*Life Skills and Young Mothers*' facilitated by the Coolock and Finglas TPSPs

Workshop 1: Life Skills and Young Mothers

This Workshop was facilitated by the Coolock and Finglas TPSP's. Siobhan Roddy, Project Worker from the Coolock TPSP presented the feedback.

Aim of Workshop

The aim of the Workshop was to create awareness among participants that teen parents need a set of life skills that will enable them to grow in self-esteem and confidence and manage their lives effectively. The Workshop focused on four sets of skills that teen parents need. Firstly, the Workshop focused on social skills and how they help develop young parents' life skills. Secondly, the Workshop examined personal development as a key tool in building a person's self-esteem and confidence, enabling them to recognise their own strengths, not only as a young parent, but as an individual. Thirdly, developing communication skills were highlighted as necessary for young parents to deal with their day-to-day responsibilities. Finally, the Workshop highlighted independent living skills. These skills can prevent young parents getting into difficulty and are done simply by giving young parents the information that they need and providing them with a practical set of skills they can use.



Siobhan Roddy, Coolock TPSP

Learning Outcomes

Participants received extra resources and new ideas for working with groups of teen parents and their families. The Workshop also provided affirmation and confirmation that

participants who were working with teen parents and their families were working in the right way. The Workshop also highlighted the importance of adopting a holistic approach to working with teen parents. This approach includes looking after teen parents mental, physical, spiritual and emotional needs. The different methods of service delivery for working with young people were also highlighted. These included group and one –to-one work, structured and unstructured and in formal and informal settings.

Signposts

The Workshop Presentation and a list of key resources are available in Appendix 3.

Workshop 2: Teen Pregnancy - The unique needs of teen parents and their families

This workshop was facilitated by the Cork and Wexford TPSPs. Teresa McElhinney, Project Leader with the Cork TPSP presented the feedback.

Aim of the Workshop

The aim of this Workshop was to promote awareness among the participants that a teenage pregnancy and parenthood can create unique needs for the young person and for his or her family. The Workshop also aimed to encourage a ‘whole family’ approach when devising supports for young parents. The Workshop examined how a teen pregnancy can have an impact on both the young mum and the young dad’s family and the needs that arise because of that. Research demonstrates that the more support that young parents get from their families, the greater their chance is of achieving better outcomes. The rationale for this Workshop was based on a research project carried out by Patricia Hurley from the Cork TPSP entitled ‘*Grandparents before Time*’. This research raised the issue that teenage pregnancy can have a significant impact on the whole family. The Workshop examined how to support families so that the young parent can become the best parent they can be.



Teresa McElhinney, Cork TPSP

Learning Outcomes

A number of key messages emerged from the Workshop. Firstly, many young parents are dependent on their family, practically, emotionally

and in a lot of cases financially. This can put pressure on parents and other family members. A teenage pregnancy (particularly to an under 17 year old) may bring a family to the attention of Social Services or the Garda Síochána due to the legal age of consent. This family may not otherwise ever have been connected with these services which can also create a stressful situation. The insecure situation of the young father and his lack of rights and that of his family, in relation to contact and building a family connection with the baby can also be difficult to deal with. The Workshop highlighted the importance of working with the young parents within their family setting as much as possible to minimise these issues. It also highlighted the necessity to offer support to the grandparents as they may encounter challenges and stress in supporting their daughter or son through pregnancy and parenthood.

Signposts

The presentation and work sheets used during the Workshop are available in Appendix 4.

Workshop 3: Working with Young Fathers

This workshop was facilitated by Finian Murray, Men's Health Development Officer, HSE Dublin/North East. Finian works with the Louth TPSP to train trainers for the Louth TPSP's *Fathers Focus Project*. Finian also presented the feedback.

Aim of the Workshop

This Workshop was divided into four main areas. The first part of the Workshop focused on a general discussion amongst the participants regarding their experience of working with fathers. The second part of the Workshop involved participants taking part in the fatherhood quiz. Each participant was given a handout with questions in 'true or false' format on the value of fathers in a child's life. The answers were provided through a PowerPoint presentation incorporating the latest research on the value of fatherhood. The presentation continued by dispelling the myths about fatherhood and highlighting positive outcomes in children's lives due to fathers' engagement. The third part of the Workshop focused on what works with young fathers. The facilitator gave the benefit of his experience working with the Father Focus Project in the Louth TPSP. Participants also highlighted examples of their work with young fathers, notably the Donegal Teen Parents Support Programme. A discussion also took place on a tool for working with fathers entitled '*The Engagement Jigsaw: a 12 Point Plan for Effectively Engaging with Fathers*'. This plan was drawn up by Colin Fowler

as a result of his experience of working with fathers in the Parents Advice Centre in Belfast. Finally, the Workshop concluded with an overview of the Young Dads Programme. This Programme was developed by Louth TPSP to assist workers when working with young fathers. As part of this course, participants must first attend a ‘train the trainer’ course and receive a copy of the resource pack.

Learning outcomes

A key learning outcome from this Workshop was benefiting from other participants’ experience of working with young fathers. Participants who attended the Workshop had an awareness of a need for a greater focus on engaging and working with young fathers. Sharing experiences gave participants additional knowledge that they could bring to their own work and demonstrated some excellent working going on around the country. The participants also gained valuable insights on the concept of fatherhood and the important role fathers play in their children’s lives. Participants learned about some of the training programmes and tools that are available to support them in working and engaging with young fathers. Finally, practically all of the participants expressed an interest in attending a ‘Young Dads’ course. The facilitator agreed to ask Joanne Murphy, Louth TPSP, to organise one during the coming months.

Sign Posts

The facilitator highlighted information that was available on the stands at the Conference as well as a number of useful websites including: www.mensproject.org ; www.fathersdirect.com ; www.mafi.org ; www.teendads.org.nz



**Finian Murray, Men’s Health Development Officer,
HSE Dublin/North East.**

Workshop 4: Parenting Issues for Teenage Parents

This Workshop was facilitated by the Carlow/Kilkenny, West Dublin and Limerick TPSPs. The feedback was presented by Martina Hogan, Project Leader with the Limerick TPSP.

Introduction

The key aim of this Workshop was to inform participants about parenting issues that teenage parents face on a daily basis and to highlight the fact that teenage parents have unique needs both as teenagers and also as parents. The Workshop also addressed boundary issues in relation to teenage parents asserting themselves as parents in the family home. Finally, the Workshop focused on the validation of the teenage experience of being a parent. The hope was that participants would leave the Workshop with increased knowledge of, and information about teen parents and how they parent.



Martina Hogan, Limerick TPSP

Learning Outcomes

A key learning outcome that emerged from the Workshop was the overall sense of admiration and respect that workers and services have for teenage parents and what they contend with on a daily basis. The Workshop also gave participants the opportunity to reflect and think about the needs of young parents both in their role as teenagers and as parents. Finally, the Workshop highlighted the wealth of experience that participants had of working with young parents and the increasing number of services that are now available for young parents.

Sign Posts

The facilitators provided a Resource Sheet listing useful websites and other information. See Appendix 5

Workshop 5: Supporting Young Parents in Education and Training

This Workshop was facilitated by the Donegal and Ballyfermot TPSPs. The feedback was presented by Tara Rowan, Project Worker with the Donegal TPSP.

Tara Rowan, Donegal TPSP

Introduction

The aim of the Workshop was to highlight the importance of supporting pregnant and parenting teenagers in educational settings to ensure the best outcomes for the health and wellbeing of the pregnant/parenting mother, the father and the baby. The Workshop demonstrated the use of the *Pathway of Care* document in an educational setting. The *Pathway of Care* document, developed by the Donegal TPSP, is a signposting leaflet of the possible support and services for teen parents in the local area.



The Workshop also highlighted the use of the Limerick TPSP's '*Guidelines for Best Practice - Supporting Students who are Pregnant and those who are Parents within the Education Setting*'. The final part of the Workshop focused on how participants could implement the information learned in the Workshop through implementing a policy for supporting young parents in the educational setting and bringing key messages back to their own work.

Learning Outcomes

The Workshop gave participants an informative step-by-step approach of how to use both documents as a support tool and the confidence to implement this in their own setting. Participants got the opportunity to see the human dimension of supporting pregnant and parenting teenagers in educational settings as well as the academic view. Participants who were not fully aware of the function of the TPSP learned more about the service and were anxious to bring this new information back to their own community/work setting.

Signposts

The '*Pathways of Care*' Documents are in Appendix 9.

'*Guidelines for Best Practice - Supporting Students who are Pregnant and those who are Parents within the Education Setting*' is available from Margaret Morris tpsp@treoir.ie

Workshop 6: Teen Parents: Myths and Stereotypes

This Workshop was facilitated by Tracy Skerrett, Project Worker with the Ballyfermot TPSP. Tracy also presented the feedback.

Introduction

The aim of this Workshop was to examine both the positive and negative images of teen parents in society. The Workshop also examined the consequences that negative stereotypes have for both teen parents and their children. The reasons for existing stereotypes were examined and participants explored ways of challenging these stereotypes, both on a one-to-one basis and in the public domain.

Learning Outcomes

The Workshop opened with a discussion of the various stereotypes that exist about teen parents. A key finding of this discussion was that positive images of teen parents directly contradict the majority of negative stereotypes that exist about this group. However, it was identified that negative stereotypes are more common in the public domain and they are often perpetuated in the media. The Workshop identified that negative stereotyping can result in poor outcomes for teen parents including low self-esteem, depression, a reluctance to engage with services and the stigmatising of teen parents and their children.

The Workshop also identified ways of addressing these negative including the need to provide factual information and statistics on teen births. Related to this is the need to promote teen parents' positive achievements and increase positive media attention. Giving young parents a forum where they can have a voice and advocate on behalf of themselves was also identified as an effective way of promoting a positive image on teen parents. Finally, it was identified that using the skills and knowledge of the TPSP service to provide training for agencies around how to work could reduce negative stereotypes and linked to this was the need to make the TPSP a standard service that is available in every area.

Signposts

Treoir was highlighted as a key provider of information concerning young parents.
www.treoir.ie

David Simpson, Facilitator

Okay, that is all the feedback from the Workshops. I just wanted to share a short story. I have been working with Margaret for the last 18 months on the Programme doing bits of training and I did a session with all the teams to plan for today. I started the session by asking ‘*what is something nice that has happened on the job?*’ and it took us an hour and a half and the stories were just fantastic. All the stories were about the connections that the workers were making with the young people and all the connections that the young people were making with the workers. All of the stories were about coming from the heart. Every single person told some story that was about the depth of the connection that the worker was making with the young person. I am coming from the outside and I want to validate that and acknowledge it. So given that it is 10 years maybe it is a good time to sing “*Happy Birthday*” to all the staff of the TPSP, to all the Projects and all the young people that have been involved. So with me “*Happy Birthday etc.*”

Developing the Capacity to Work with Young Fathers

Alison Loughlin – Director, Parenting Forum, Northern Ireland

Rosemary Grant, Chair

Got away without singing for a second time today! To start off this part of the session we have Alison Loughlin who is the Director of Parenting Forum in Northern Ireland and Alison is going to talk about developing the capacity to work with young fathers. Alison has been employed as a director of the Parenting Forum for the last eight years; it is a project that is based within the Parents Advice Centre. Over the past sixteen years she has been employed in both the voluntary and community sectors by Relate Northern Ireland as educational training manager and the Princes Trust Volunteer as a Project Manager. Through all of this, Alison’s knowledge of working with parents and young people has expanded and developed hugely and she had been directly involved in the implementation of the National Occupational Standards and Qualifications of working with parents. So on that note I am going to hand over to Alison.

Alison Loughlin

Just while we are setting up, I should say that I was a teen parent. I had my son when I was eighteen, and if you had told me then that I would be standing up here now, and that I would be doing the job that I am doing, I would have said that you were mad. Listening to both Ashley and Marie this morning was very moving because a lot of what they said actually resonated with me at that time 25 years ago about where I was at. I think you should be congratulated for the work that you are all doing and the supports that are now available for young people; it was only that I had good family support that I got to the other side. I wish you well after 10 years and I know you are going to go on for many more years to come.

I would like to thank Margaret for allowing me to come and speak today about working with fathers and working with young fathers in particular. In true Kick Start style, which is a Programme I am going to talk about, I am going to pass over to you first and foremost and, for those of you who work, I am going to say to you *“what work are you currently doing with young fathers?”* If you are doing some work with them, *“what are you doing?”* and, if not, maybe *“what is stopping you from engaging with them?”* And for the parents in the audience, ask yourself *“how involved was my dad in my upbringing?”* If you are a dad, *“how involved are you in your child’s upbringing?”* If you are a mum *“how involved is the dad in your child’s upbringing?”* So just with the other person beside you spend a couple of minutes talking about what role you are here in today - or the role you are most comfortable in.

Okay, I am going to stop you now because we are tight for time. It was just to begin your thinking about your work and your involvement with dads and the involvement of your own dad in your life etc. I want you to hold some of those thoughts as I talk about work with dads. Quite often we actually look for reasons not to work with fathers. We are already committed to traditional events. We talk ourselves out of it because we have a set calendar of events and we have set Programmes. Fathers are welcome but its only mums that turn up. It’s an afterthought and it is outside the strategic plan. If something is not a priority in a strategic plan, it will not happen. Resources will not be allocated against it and it just doesn’t work.

“It will require too much effort and too much planning”. “We tried it and it didn’t work”. “It was too much like hard work”. “There is little return for the effort we have made”. These are the kind of things that we have heard in the past. There is no funding or resources. Well, there is not going to be funding or resources for anything now and if we were to wait

on funding and resources would we have done half the things that we did in the past? Would it work? Well, if you don't try you don't know, isn't that true? With regard to the work that you started 10 years ago, someone had to have an idea, someone had to step forward and someone had to prove that they could do it.

We have an awful lot of negative images about fathers. *"Fathers just aren't interested; they leave it to the mothers"*. Fathers are often just seen as disciplinarians. How often do we hear *"Wait till your father gets home, he will sort you out"*. What positive contribution do dads actually make? Statements like:

"What added value do they bring to our work?" "We are happy working with the mums and it is going so well". "Sometimes it is difficult to engage and energise the mums so we don't have time to do the dads".

So we talk ourselves out of working with fathers.



**Alison Loughlin, Director,
Parenting Forum, Northern Ireland**

And then we have to look at 'the trouble with men'. They die earlier than women. The average age for men to die is 76 and we women last till eighty one years of age on average. They also fail in education which means that they are less likely to return to education if they step out of it. Some of that could be to do with attitudes but, if you look at some of the funding that has gone into helping women back into education, men have been barred from that. They die from treatable illnesses because they are less likely to go to the GP and they are less likely to ask for help until it is actually too late. They are more likely to die from accidents; they are three times more likely to die in a road accident or an accident at work. They are often the victims of violent crime. Young men in particular are more likely to be the victim of a GBH (grievous bodily harm) or the victim of crime in general. Not pensioners as they would have us believe in the media but young men, particularly between the ages of

16 and 24. On a more serious note they are more likely to commit suicide. In fact they are three times more likely to commit suicide when they are over the age of 14 than women.

So let's deal with some of the myths. Firstly, what I said to you earlier:

"They are not interested and it is easier to work with the women so why bother"?

Actually what fathers tell us from the work that we have done, is that being a parent is the most important part of their lives.

"Only mothers are biologically programmed to respond to babies"

No. Both mothers and fathers respond in the same way to a crying baby and at the same time. *"Fathers don't possess the right skills"* and we women get in the way. When the baby starts crying we say *"pass him over to me"*. It has been shown that in caring for a baby, both mothers and fathers develop the skills at the same rate.

"Parentcraft courses for fathers are a waste of time".

Actually, when fathers attend parentcraft programmes and parenting programmes, they take on the care of their babies quicker than those fathers who don't attend.

"Men don't want to spend any time with their children".

Actually, fathers are more likely to play and interact with their children than mothers. The kind of play that they do is quite different. A dad's play is more 'rough and tumble' and that is a valuable type of play because it is of benefit to the child's social and emotional wellbeing.

So when we did our work with fathers what did we learn? We over intellectualised our work. We looked for reasons not to work with fathers when we needed to value the ways of working with fathers. We expect too much too soon and we think it is too difficult or too different to working with mothers. We look to the experts whoever they are (David is one of them and I can vouch for that) to be told what to do and what to think. Sometimes people look for the recipe of working with fathers. If I do A and B I will get C, the perfect dad. There is no A, B and C with mums so why would there be when it comes to dads? It's common sense and it is not rocket science. It is no more different and it is no more difficult than working with mothers. In fact, with some thought, a little planning and a bit of effort, it may even be easier, but more about that later.

So back to “*what good are dads?*” As I have already said, fathering is the most important part of their lives. Research tells us the important roles that fathers play in their children’s lives and why fathers are important. Some of the stats say that anorexic and bulimic girls often have poor or distant relationships with their fathers. Children whose fathers are actively engaged in their lives are better at making friends, perform better at school and have higher IQ scores. In fact, where dads spend time reading to their children, those children’s reading age at 16 are 10% higher than the average score. It reinforces a girl’s self-esteem. Girls who have a good relationship with their fathers are more likely to put off their first sexual experience until much later in their lives. Delinquency is most common in boys whose fathers spend little time with them. In fact, there was a recent study done in Northern Ireland where researchers went into a prison where young men were based and they worked with them around the image they had of the father in their lives. What they found was the missing component of a dad as a positive role model in the young men’s lives from a very young age. So it comes down to one thing and one thing only, fathers do have a positive impact on their children through their life stages.

With that in mind, the Parents Advice Centre carried out a couple of pieces of work through the ‘*Men’s Life and Times*’ module within the ‘*Northern Ireland Life and Times*’ survey. It demonstrated that men desire to be involved in their children’s lives; that they are looking for and need to find ways to balance work and family life; that they are open to moving beyond traditional roles and the demand for change and openness to change is actually there. David, who I have already mentioned, and Colin Fowler then began to run a number of seminars and conferences particularly ‘*It Can be Done*’ in 2002 and ‘*Fathers – the good, the bad and the Myths*’ in 2004.

These were very well attended and excellent conferences but it left organisations and practitioners with more questions than answers about the why, the how, the when, the who and the what of working with dads. So in 2005, David, who you have all met, and Colin Fowler from PAC designed a seven-month programme. This was an action based learning programme funded by the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland. The aim of the programme is to support organisations and practitioners to build that capacity to work with fathers. The programme has successfully run for five years and we are going into our sixth year.

So what is Kick Start? The aim of Kick Start is to provide a seven-month package of training, support, networking, reflection and practical actions. It is not just sitting and thinking about how you are going to do it, you actually get up, join in and you do some of the work. I will share some of the work that has come out of the projects in the last five years later. Kick Start's main aim was to increase the quantity and quality of work with fathers. It aimed to give not only the information and the skills from the learning, but practical ways they could do their own work.

So I will just give you a little snap shot of the programme because it is a 'whole organisation' approach. There is an initial briefing session for the managers of the projects. You don't just go away and do the training and then return to work, everyone is involved. So the managers attend first to understand what is involved and what their workers will have to go through. They are also asked to carry out an organisational review along with their workers because as you will hear David saying, the most important thing is to be realistic about is your starting point. There is no point in running before you can walk and sometimes you even have to sit down and look at what you are doing before you can walk. So it is looking at the organisation as a whole. There are then three training days for practitioners, looking at the how, the what and the when of working with fathers.

Part of the training is that the practitioners who take part have to deliver a Father's Day Project based on where they are currently at. It might be based in-house, so it might be sitting and planning how we are going to take this forward. I am going to use some of David's anecdotal stuff where one practitioner mentioned that it is all women in their group and they don't know how to get men in. For their Father's Day Project they sat with the women and worked with them about what it would be like to bring men into the setting. It is about the small things as well as the big things.

One of the Kick Start events this year brought together seven projects, some of which had taken part in previous Kick Starts, and it brought together 300 families for a Fun Day. It had a football tournament, as it was a way to get the guys on board because the focus was on men's health as well. Now those are major events and you don't need to necessarily do those. We provide a Support Day about practically planning what they are going to do and it involves sharing and networking across the group. I mean we discuss bouncy castle insurance and one group made a CD for dads in their project. The thought was '*what songs are out there that we can put on this for dads?*' So the dads in the group helped that

practitioner come up with a list of songs to do with dads. The practitioners then write a report and finally, get together to do some planning for what we call our 'presentation morning'. This is pretty much a celebration of the work that has gone on during the year with dads.

So why start Kick Start? Kick Start was set up to address a number of issues. Quite often there was once-off short training programmes. Yes, when we all go and do days like this it is great. We hear so much really good stuff and we think '*do you know something I am going to go back and I am going to do it*'. Unfortunately, when we go back into our busy lives and we get absorbed into the daily routine of what has to be done, that learning often doesn't get translated into practice. There is often an organisational culture that actually affects the decisions and actions with regard to fathers work. Often fathers aren't valued and the culture of the organisation may even be subconsciously geared towards mothers not fathers. Therefore it is a barrier to fathers coming in. Quite often we do things because it is the 'flavour of the month'. We heard Pat saying earlier '*new skins for old ceremonies*'. '*We have to re-invent ourselves*', '*we have to do something different*' and funding streams also go through that. Quite often we find that after a conference people are geared up and they say:

"That's what we need, we need to get a father's worker, we need to get a man in, we need to get him trained and he is going to be wonderful. He is going to deliver everything, he is going to be the superman and he is going to sort them all out"

This is back to the culture as well. So when the dad arrives at the door and the receptionist say '*Sorry, Jim, our father's worker, is not here today could you come back?*'"

Quite often there was also an unrealistic expectation on those workers to get twenty dads through the door and sitting in a room discussing the whole issue and that was totally unrealistic. So many workers actually left due to feeling isolated and a lack of understanding and a lack of support. Linked to that 'flavour of the month' is the pressure to get bums on seats and fathers coming through the door. This 'bums on seats' attitude misses the key elements of understanding how we work with dads and the need to build relationships with them. One of the Father's Day projects this year put on a curry night for dads. The two workers had got all the stuff and had it all set up and two dads turned up. So there were two dads and two workers and they sat there with the curry. Only two dads turned up because it was a crucial football night. The workers were feeling a bit despondent because of the low turnout. However, what they didn't realise was that those two dads were key to the rest of the

dads within that community. One of them was very much the 'hard man', the leader, so if he was seen to go then you were going to get other dads. The other dad was actively involved in other activities as well and he was able to bring in more dads. So, while they only had two dads on that night and were feeling despondent, it was actually a keystone for taking that work forward and building other bits and pieces as well.

Fathers are often quite excluded in the work and this happens subconsciously. Mothers can actually be a barrier to fathers using the service and fathers can be quite hard to reach. Quite often you will hear workers say:

"Is there chance of such and such coming in?" and the response is *"No, there is no point in saying it to him, he won't be interested."* Or *"Will you pass that onto him?"* And the response is *"No, there is no point in giving it to him, he's too busy, and he won't come."*

Mothers can get quite protective and have an ownership of the project. They say:

*"You are not bringing them in here, what about **our** session?"*

They can actually end up excluding the dads as well, so you need to be aware of that when you are thinking about the work.

Then there is the notion of 'one size fits all'. While there are similar characteristics and themes, what Kick Start does is support the organisation in its own unique way, from where it is at, and how it takes that work forward. It reflects the work that fathers need and some of the ideas that can be put together to get funding and support the fathers to get through the door. So it is about what the fathers need rather than what the funding streams are.

I am quickly going to go through some of the outcomes. The outcome for the practitioner is an increased understanding of their own father and their experience of fatherhood. That is important because we have to deal with how we were parented by our fathers and the relationships we had with our fathers if we are going to work with dads. Particularly I think for female workers, we can't walk in men's shoes but we have to understand what it was like for us. There was an increase in awareness of personal attitudes and values in relation to fatherhood and fathering. There was an increase in knowledge about the contribution that fathers make to children's development. This included some of the knowledge and some of the stats of what dads actually do and the importance of being involved. It gave them the skills, ideas and knowledge about working with dads and taking things forward, not just theoretically, practically as well. It identified the barriers to including fathers within their work, in particularly work with young dads. Throughout its six-year's duration, on average, there are 12-15 participants and many years we have much more than that. The numbers of

mothers, fathers and children that take part in the Father's Day activities is, on average, 500 in one year.

We always look at what the organisation gets out of it because at the end of the year I have to report back as to what was effective and all that. What we find is a cultural change across the whole organisation, from the receptionist who said "*you have to wait till the father's worker gets here*" now they are all more aware from the organisational review. They start to look at what they are doing, what they are saying, how they present themselves and how they engage.

Another change that actually happened with one project was a community cultural change. One of the Father's Day projects that happened, I am sure you have all heard of the Holy Cross/Ardoyne stuff from many years ago when the kids couldn't get to school. Well, the workers from those two communities took part in Kick Start and on Father's Day they took a busload, I mean a full busload of dads and their kids (no mums) out for the day and went bowling and to McDonalds. I shouldn't say (as that was not the 'healthy eating' bit) but they went and there were some very hard guys on that bus and they were from very different communities. They are still friends, they still meet up and that project is still running events for those dads today. In fact they just had a big celebration during their own Father's Day. They didn't take part in Kick Start this year and they had their own thing for those dads from different communities to come together.

Kick Start gives organisations ways of becoming more family friendly. It looks at their literature, their posters and things like that and I will tell you a quick funny story related to this. One man went into one of the Kick Start projects and he could hear people coming along so he quickly lifted up a brochure to hide but he lifted up the breastfeeding brochure and he didn't know whether to put it down or keep reading!. Did he want people to think he was a pervert or an interested dad? So it is about being aware of who is coming in. There were no car magazines, for example, so looking at those kind of things. It creates new contacts for people and opportunities for networking, as well as sharing information, particularly when they are trying something new for the first time or they have an interest in similar work.

In Northern Ireland, from those small seeds, it has increased funding and expenditure and work with fathers. We now have more fathers' workers and not all of them men and much more work can happen in Northern Ireland. So that is why we began Kick Start. Kick Start

Programme Reports, which have to go to our funders every year, are available on our website as are many other resources to do with fathers as well. My contact details are there if you want to get in touch with me and, if there is anything I can do, I will. It would be interesting if there were an organisation here in the South who would like to pilot this and take it forward because we would be very happy to work with you on the Kick Start programme. I would love to have shared more with you about what participants get out of it, but I will leave you with a couple of things. It was about what the dads got out of it. Well the dads were more involved in their children's lives; they themselves developed more skills and they had better relationships with their children. Their children will have better outcomes in the long term as well because they had better relationships with their fathers. Thank You.

Supporting the Relationship between Young Fathers and their Children.

A Practical Example

Marie Collins, Project Worker, Wexford TPSP

Rosemary Grant, Chair: Thank you very much Alison, there is obviously an invitation there for one of the projects or for any other organisation where people might be involved in working with parents to pilot a project in the Republic.

The second speaker this afternoon is Marie Collins and Marie is going to talk about supporting the relationship between young fathers and their children. Marie is a qualified nurse and a midwife and her background is mainly in primary healthcare. She has worked in Kenya as a volunteer and also in Gorey as a practice nurse. Marie started working with the TPSP in North Wexford since it began and before that Marie was working in the School Completion Programme which plays a very important part of the co-operation between the TPSP and the Dept of Education and Skills for all of the young mums and dads that we work with. So - to Marie.

Marie Collins

Good afternoon, everyone. This afternoon I am going to talk to you about Paul, a young man who came to our service looking for help. I am going to introduce him to you through a DVD that our project made and also to other young parents we have supported in the project. First of all, I am going to tell you about Paul's story. My name is Marie Collins and I am a

TPSP project worker in North Wexford. The project is based in Gorey, which is a rural coastal town with a population of around four thousand. The project was set up in May 2008 and is supported by the HSE and Barnardos. It consists of two project workers; one part time administrator and a project leader. We share an office with the Barnardos Family Welfare Conference. Today I am going to tell you about one young dad who came to the TPSP looking for help with how to gain access to his baby daughter.



Marie Collins, Wexford TPSP

Paul was eighteen and in his Leaving Certificate year in school. He was living with his parents and younger siblings. He had had a relationship with the mother who had become pregnant. However the relationship had ended during the pregnancy and communication between them had become hostile. Paul told me that he had first become aware of his daughter's birth through Facebook when a photo has been posted on the site. He was very keen to form a relationship with his daughter and had the full support of his own parents who were also were very anxious to have a relationship with their granddaughter.

He became aware of our service through his school guidance counsellor and the Citizens Information Centre and the first contact was by Paul's mother who asked if we could help him. As a family, they wanted to avoid the courts if at all possible and within a week we had made a home visit and met Paul and his family and listened to their story. As I said, they had first made contact with us through the Citizens Information Centre and through his guidance counsellor. They wanted us to help with gaining access to his daughter as the young mother was refusing to give her permission.

When I first met Paul, he told me his story and his concerns and fears about not being able to see his daughter. He told me that he felt powerless and unsure what options were available to him. The only option that Paul saw was going down the court route. At this meeting, I explored with Paul the possible options other than the court process. He said the poor communication between him and the young mum was a major stumbling block to any progress being made. I explained the process of mediation to the family and asked Paul if the young mother would agree to this. I suggested that Paul ask her if she would meet with me at

a neutral venue to explore the possibility of opening up the lines of communication between both parents.

The young mum was not involved with the TPSP and she lived outside our catchment area. Despite this she agreed to meet with me. At this meeting, the young mum told me that she had felt angry and vulnerable and abandoned by Paul at an early stage in the pregnancy. She was hurt that Paul had no input during the pregnancy and that now he wanted contact with his daughter. The young mum felt that she was managing okay; that she was able to do everything for her baby and she did not think her daughter would miss out by not having a father. She expressed her anger with Paul and wondered why all of a sudden he was showing an interest. It was important to acknowledge this young mothers justified sense of abandonment while at the same time encouraging her to see why it is important for a child to be cared for and loved by both parents. At this meeting we were able to talk about the possibility of meeting with Paul, explain the process of mediation, and whether she would be willing to take part. She agreed to meet with Paul in the office in Barnardos with me as facilitator. She also agreed to explore the possibility of Paul having access to his daughter and how this might work.

So a meeting with Paul, myself and the young mum took place in the office in Barnardos. The couple had not met for several months and Paul had never met his daughter and, as I said, had only seen a photograph of her on Facebook. Despite this, things went really well and both Paul and the young mum were able to tell their sides of the story in a non-judgemental, supportive environment. The young mother was really angry with Paul for suddenly becoming interested in his daughter and was not sure what had changed. She felt that she was managing okay; that she could give her everything and that she would be grand. Paul told his story and he spoke about how humiliated he felt in a social setting by the young mum during the relationship and about the way she related to him amongst their friends. He also expressed his feelings about being tricked into the pregnancy, as she had not told him that she had stopped taking the contraceptive pill. He also queried being the father and only when he saw a picture of his daughter was he sure that he was. He spoke of the difficult relationship they had together and, although the pregnancy was unplanned, he still wanted to be a father to his daughter and play a major role in her life. He did not want his daughter to grow up without a father when he was there for her.

Through the mediation process Paul and the young mother were asked to name what factors they thought were important in order for their daughter to have a healthy and happy life. They both did this and when they looked at what they said they wanted for their daughter, they could see very clearly that they were in agreement on the fundamental needs of their child. Through the process of mediation, they were also able to agree on Paul meeting his daughter for the first time and introducing her to his parents who were also very anxious to have a role in their granddaughter's life. A plan was drawn up which involved a date and a venue being set up. The mum agreed that she would bring her daughter to Paul's house and that she would stay with her for the afternoon just to ensure that she was not upset with being left with people that she did not know. It was important at this stage that I confirmed for the mother that her daughter would be safe and well care for in Paul's house.

Paul rang me to say that the meeting had been a failure. He had been late and because he had been late the young mother was not prepared to leave her daughter. She felt that he had broken the agreement and it cannot be underestimated how difficult a step this was for the young couple. They did, however, repeat the arrangement the following week, which was very successful, and Paul and his family had a very emotional meeting with his daughter. This arrangement has gone from strength to strength with his daughter now spending 3-4 days a week with Paul and his family. Paul completed his Leaving Certificate and has since commenced work in a local factory where he appears to be doing very well. Paul's daughter has successfully bonded with her father, her grandparents and her aunties and uncles. She has been lovingly embraced by her family and it appears that both the young families and their extended families are very pleased with the outcome.

I strongly feel that the mediation training organised by the TPSP was a vital process which enabled us to facilitate these young parents in putting aside their personal hurts and focusing on their daughter, so allowing them to move forward in a safe and non-threatening way towards finding the best solution. They agreed to a practical arrangement that suited them and it has proved to work. It has given them the confidence to re-negotiate the details as their personal situation changes from time to time. They have done this successfully while keeping the care and welfare of their daughter central. As a result, both parents have their daughter in their lives.

This child will grow up with a present father who was an active parent. Paul is able to be a Dad to his daughter and the young child has the benefit of a loving family in her life. The

young mum also has the support of her ex-partner in the upbringing and major decision-making in their daughter's life.

I just want to show you a short DVD that our project made and to introduce Paul to you. There are also two young mothers in the DVD. We think that this intervention represents a practical example of how the TPSP can facilitate a process in which teen parents and their children can function as a supportive family unit despite their personal difficulties. I believe that the majority of parents want to do their best of their children and as this example demonstrates it is possible to support young parents to be the best parents they can be.

Thank you.

Rosemary Grant, Chair: Thank you very much for that. I was particularly struck (and I know organisations are very conscious of confidentiality issues when it comes to making videos) but there would be a lot of professionals who would be hard put to be as confidential as Paul in his reference to the other party. And I was very struck -even at case conference or meetings or whatever you nearly would use a name -so it was very well done. The other two things that struck me very strongly throughout out the DVD was the piece about education and the TPSP and self-esteem and valuing themselves. And how people hear about the TPSP, whether it was through the school or the midwives or the public health nurse as we heard this morning. And also the whole are about being able to go back to school and the help with the crèche or whatever, so that was extremely good. I was also very struck by the link between what Marie and Ashley said this morning and what the different dads and mums and grandparents were saying on the DVD: about the link about people learning how to be a grandparent in respect of mother and daughter, instead of being a mother to the mother and a mother to the child.

So we are going to have a couple of minutes of questions, if anybody has any questions for either Alison or Marie, questions or comments. You have had the chance to wake up now earlier with the rap!

Questions and Answers

Question 1

This is a more general comment, I am just thinking about the tenth anniversary piece today. I suppose I came along half way through the first year of the TPSP and I just think the evidence that we have heard today is so overwhelming of the benefit of the TPSP. The idea that it was a conversation that Sheila had with Frank Fahey twelve years ago that created three pilot projects and that it came out of those pilot projects very clearly that this Programme had to be rolled out and that it had to become available to every teen parent in the country and that fact that we have been able to progress that in very difficult financial circumstances.

We are probably about a quarter of the way there but I think the real challenge after today is how we get all the way. I think apart from the fact that it is obviously in the best interest of teen parents, I think the economic arguments that Sheila was touching on are important. I think that in the difficult financial circumstances that the country is in at the moment, it makes sense to intervene early. It makes sense to help young parents become the best parents they can be without becoming long term dependent on state services and to be contributing members of society in every way. I think that's a really important message to get across. We had a little opportunity many years ago to get that very important message across to Brian Lenihan when he was Minister for Children. He came out and met some of the young parents in West Dublin and he was blown away by the benefit of a very small amount of investment of state money in those children and he said that day leaving and getting into the car that he saw the economic benefits of it. I think we need to find ways to keep reminding Brian Lenihan and whoever replaces him in months to come about the economic arguments as well as the social arguments for the TPSP.

Question 2

I would just like to make a comment that I was there at the beginning of one of the three pilot projects and just looking around at how much it has grown just really blows my mind. The enthusiasm that the 'new TPSPs' as I call them have and the support that they are getting from their own agencies is just incredible. I remember having a meeting with Aileen and

Margaret in Athlone and the three of us met up and we got to what we thought was the Prince of Wales hotel which it turns out, had been demolished! So we sat in a pub that morning talking about the projects and it was very cold and the three of us huddled together and it's amazing that out of that all this has grown. I am just blown away by the response today it is fantastic and 'happy birthday' everybody.

10 Years On - Reflections of a Young Galway Mother

Pamela Long

Rosemary Grant, Chair: It might be a very appropriate opportunity at this point to introduce our next speaker. Marie and Ashley spoke this morning as a relatively new parent and grandparent. If I remember Ashley's baby is 20 months and they represent new members of the TPSP. We are coming now towards the end of our evening and it seems very appropriate to introduce Pamela Long. Pamela was here at the very beginning of the TPSP here in Galway, her son Leon is 10 years old now and she was one of the first young parents to become involved in the Programme in Galway. Pamela is now working in the area of youth work and community development herself. So she is going to talk a little bit about her reflections 10 years on as a young Galway mum.

Pamela Long

Hi, good afternoon. I am really happy to be here today to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Teen Parents Support Programme. I got so much from it personally that I was delighted when Aileen asked me to do it.

I first came in contact with the Teen Parents Support Programme ten years ago. I had just become a new teen mum. I was seventeen and it was extremely daunting and exciting. At the time I didn't know what was ahead of me and I found the Teen Parents Support Programme to have a very supportive and non-judgemental attitude. It really helped towards the transition of becoming a new young parent. I think at any age becoming a new parent is hard enough, let alone being young as well.

They offered a monthly information leaflet, which was very helpful, and they called out to me once a month. That Programme was called First Steps and it clearly stated the progress and the development of your child throughout the first few months. I really enjoyed reading

it and I looked forward every month to seeing the process my child was making. I could relate to it and was able to check off and say: *“oh yeah he is going through that, he is sitting up now”* and, you know, all of the different areas of your child’s development.

For me personally, the Teen Parents Support Programme had a huge influence in terms of education. I come from a big family so I have a lot of family support and friends around me.



So I utilised the service for the educational side of things. A strong memory that always sticks out in my mind when I think about the TPSP was when I decided to go back into education and that first thought and step of

Pamela Long, Galway TPSP

saying *“I want to go back”*. I didn’t know what I was going to do and I didn’t know how I was going to go about it, but I knew I wanted to do something. I remember I got in touch with the Teen Parents Support Programme and they talked through exactly what I was looking for and they talked through what I wanted. They knew I wanted something that was going to bring me into it slowly, something not too overwhelming in the beginning. When I did decide to go and meet a tutor, the TPSP accompanied me up to the first initial meeting with the tutors. I remember feeling so anxious and nervous going up and wondering what it was going to be like and was I going to be able for it. So it was fantastic and it just gave me that extra boost to go up as I felt I had a bit of a safety net with me.

So the first initial meeting was brilliant because the Teen Parents Support Programme was there with me but after that they slowly took a step back and I think that is what gave me the extra confidence and self-esteem. To think that 10 years on I would be standing here talking, there is no way I would ever have spoken in front of people. (I am nervous and I hope I am hiding it well!)

So a couple of years ago I kind of fell into Youth Work. When the opportunity arose, I thought *“yeah, this is definitely something I want to get involved in”*. I wanted to give something back. So I kind of felt it was my turn and I felt that I could relate to young parents and young people in general. I was thinking today whether I would have gone into this work if I hadn’t had the experiences that I have had (and I really don’t know) but I do know that I wanted to empower more young people the way they empowered me to go back to education,

or whatever it is that the young person wants. I wanted to help them to enhance their lives and make changes for them. I definitely think that the Teen Parents Support Programme has done that for me.

Even now in my work I get great fulfilment and it is fabulous just to give people some hope in today's society, especially young people and young mothers. I feel that the Teen Parents Support Programme strives to enhance young people and change their lives and I think it is fantastic. And it doesn't matter whether it is through education or health or emotional support, it doesn't matter, it is about personal development and getting to that place yourself. You don't have to be something supersonic and brilliant, it is just about getting to that place and it means a lot to that individual person.

So I would like to really thank and commend Aileen Davis and all the staff with the Teen Parent Support Programme for all their hard work and I am so delighted to be here to speak for them and I wish you all the best for the future.



(L to R) Aileen Davies, Imelda Ryan and Monica Meaney, staff of the Galway TPSP

Closing Remarks

Margaret Morris, National Coordinator, Teen Parent Support Programme

Good evening. I promised at the beginning was that we would start on time and finish on time so at least that is one objective that we have achieved today if nothing else. I am not going to keep you very long; first of all, though, I am going to harass you a little bit. In your packs you will all find an Evaluation Sheet and I am going to ask you all to complete it to help us in the future when we are trying to do something like this again. There is a very prominent box made by Anita Whelan of the TPSP for you to drop your Evaluation Sheets into when you are leaving and I would very much appreciate it if you could do that

The second thing is that I noticed quite a lot of networking going on today and in your Conference Pack you will find a list of attendees, some of whom couldn't make it today, but if you were chatting to someone you will find that persons email details so that you can contact them. I want say 'thank you' to Margot from Treoir for putting that together and indeed for all of her other support as well.

The third thing is that you will get Proceedings of the Conference and it will probably be about February when you get them. Some of you will have met Sinéad, she dropped into some of the workshops and she has been around. Sinéad will be doing this and we will send it out for you to look back on, a little souvenir.

So there is nothing left for me to say really but to thank you all for coming and for participating and for making the day what, I think, was a success for us and a very enjoyable day for us as well. I want to thank the speakers and the chairpersons and I particularly want to thank Marie and Ashley Keenan and Pamela who you have just heard, for sharing their first-hand experience with us and their first-hand experience of teen parenthood. I want to thank the Conference Office, the catering staff in NUIG, Steve here who was dealing with the AV side and the NUIG security staff. They were an absolute pleasure to deal with and I would certainly recommend them if any of you are thinking of holding a conference yourselves.

I want to thank the TPSP project staff. Any of you who attended the Workshops will have seen they have put a lot of work into today and they also produced the displays around the walls. I particularly want to thank the Galway staff, Aileen and Imelda and Monica who did

so much work on the ground to make this a success. Finally I want to thank Bella Maher in Treoir. Some of you would have been in contact with Bella when you were registering. She, single handed, did all of the administration that went into today and after the Conference. I am thinking of suggesting to her that she run a Diploma course called 'Attention to Detail and Anticipating Problems' because it is really thanks to her that the day has run as smoothly as it has. Thank you very much, Bella.

So there is nothing left me to say, really, except again thank you for coming and hopefully we will meet again some other time. I wish you all a very safe journey home.

Appendix 1

Teenage Parenthood: Pathways to Coping

Professor Pat Dolan



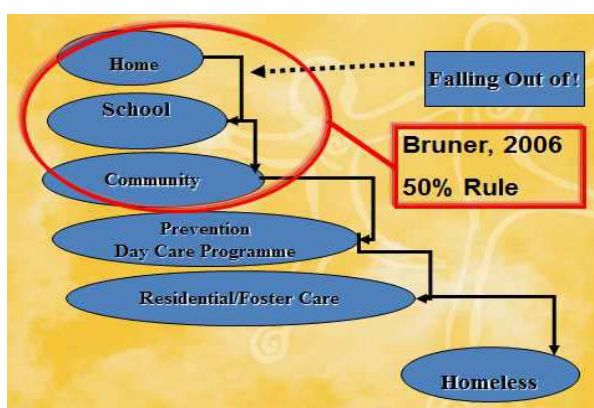
My Starting Point of Knowledge

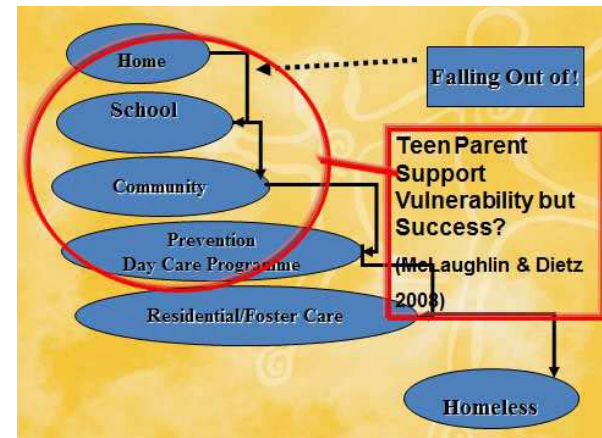
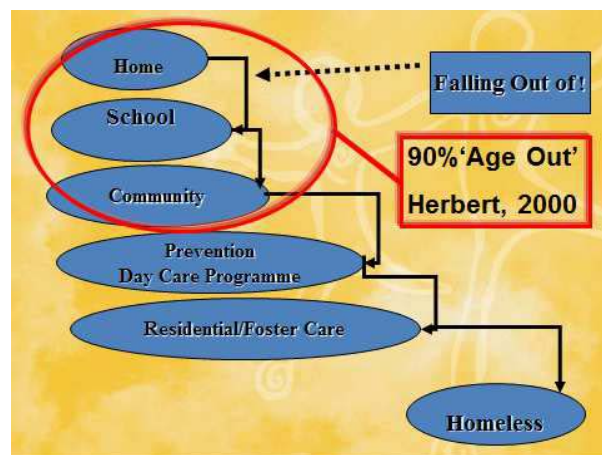
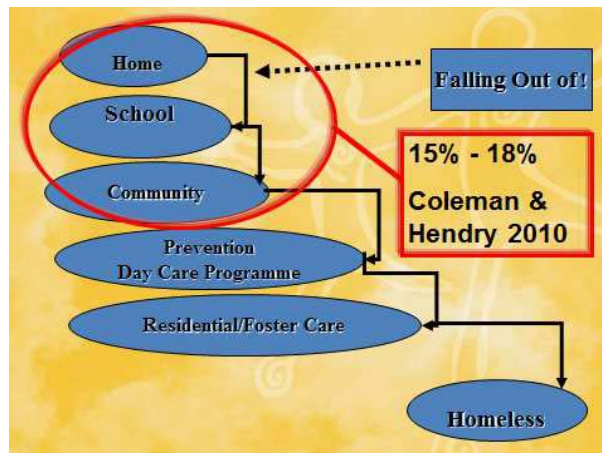
1. Acknowledge the power of informal support from Parents Family and Friends key actors in supporting Teen Parents
2. Importance of Prevention Support Programmes Like TPSP

Support is a Human Right for Teen Parents! (Regardless of Economy)

Twin Track Issues of Teen Parenting

1. Boys and Girls becoming Parents
2. Mothers and Fathers Own Development
3. Less Known of Fatherhood Influences (Natesha Cabrera and Colleagues 2000)





Teen Parenting Can Have Either a Negative or Positive effect (Over Time)

A Positive Turning Point Which Musters in Teen Parents a Skill to Be and Remain Resilient in Later Life (Ungar 2004)

V

A Burden which Culminates in Ruination

Resilience
As a
Fulcrum

Menu For Social Support – For Teen Parents

Teen Parent Prog.	Getting By (Bonding Capital)	Getting Ahead (Bridging Capital)
Interventions	Connectedness	Change
Outputs	Concrete Support (Hidden)	Multiple Forms of Help
Outcomes	Coping	Life Improvement

A. Bound by Maximum Informal Support
B. Reciprocity
C. Time and Timing

Menu For Resilience - Towards Prevention

Project Orientation	Getting By (Bonding Capital)	Getting Ahead (Bridging Capital)
Five R's	Reliable Alliance	Positive Actor as Youth
Social Ecology	Embedded Comm.	Civic Action
Asset Based Perspective	Hobbies Success	Recognition

A. Bound by Protective Factors in 'Credit'
B. Self-Compassion balanced by Responsibility
C. Pathway to success in Education V Poverty

Valuing Youth Today (New Sociology of C & Y)

- Supporting Teen Parents (not just for families) for Society
- Youth proven capacity to be resilient and to provide Action – Tsunami - 9/11 Haiti
- Being supportive to others youth benefit themselves, Respite from own problems – Acting In and/or Acting Out

This has huge Potential– Message for Interventions

Core 5 R's for creating Resiliency Among Teen Parents and their Children

Responsiveness

Relationship

Reciprocity

Ritual

Routine

Ordinary Magic

Ann Masten (2003)

- Secure Base
- Relationship between Resiliency and Social Support

Serendipity

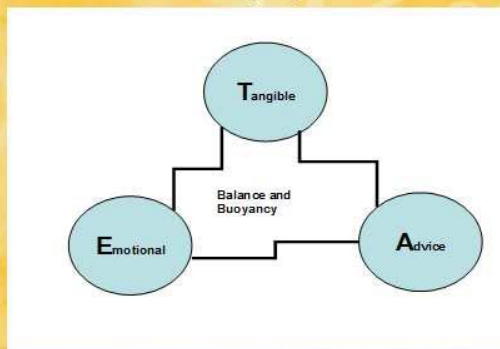


- **Role of Key Episodes**
- Resilient Teen Parents are those who can take opportunities that come their way
- Resilient Families and Communities (Chaskin 2006)
- Just as becoming a Teen Parent can be a chance event - so also chance events can positively aid coping (Frydenberg 2001)

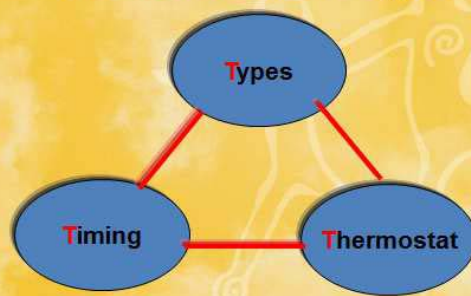


The Centrality of at Least One Reliable Alliance

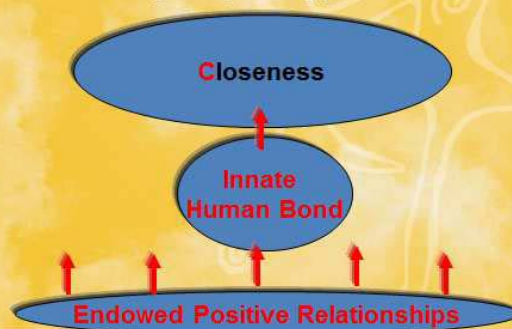
TEA as Types of Support that Aid Coping



Three Ts that influence Support



Three influence of Closeness as a Quality of Support



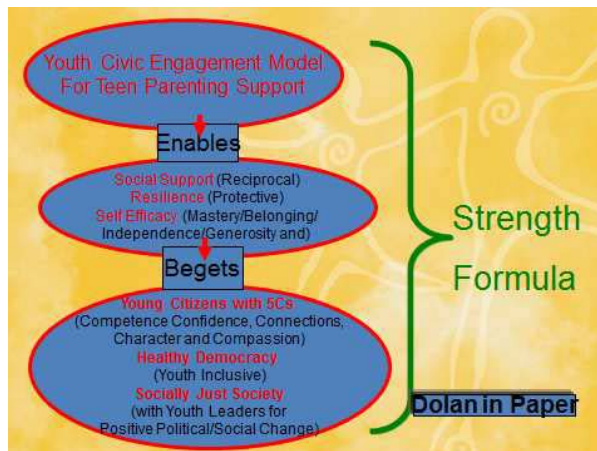
Rutter's 8 Mechanisms to enable Resilience Potential for Teen Parent = √ (Tentative) No or Not known = ?

- Reduce sensitivity to risk ?
(should it happen)
- Reduction of risk impact
(After it has happened) √
- Reduction of negative chain reactions
(other things going wrong) √
- Increase positive chain reaction
(setting things to go right) √

- Promote self esteem and self-efficacy
(strengthen view of self and self belief) √
- Neutralizing or compensatory positive experiences
(one for one compensate) √
- Opening up of positive opportunities
(positive future planning) √
- Positive cognitive processing of negative experiences
(Reframe negative events or thoughts into positive ones) ?

**Joseph Rowntree - The Role
Pioneer**

**Believed in
Resilience Teen Parents
V
Negative Orphanage
Placement and Magdalen Policy**



Types and Places for Civic Engagement/Action
Political - Social Justice Championing a Cause
Social - Altruism Meeting a Need

in Home
"Young Carers
as Teen Parents in Reverse"

in School/Work
"Peer Educators or Mentors"

**in Family and Community
Connectivity**

Debit and Credit Book of Coping

Debit		Credit
Poverty		Key Alliance(s)
Overburden		Physical Resources
Same Time Problems		Ability to Parent
Low Capacity		Parenting Part of Life
Existing Negativities		Hopeful
No Career Plan		
Lack of Hopefulness		

Overall Key Factors in Coping

1. Self efficacy outgoing temperament
2. Social bonding warm affectionate relationships
3. Adults setting healthy standards
4. Opportunities for involvement
5. Enable Hopefulness

Key Message for Parenting
Regardless of "Age Size Colour and Creed"

Love Me
Help Me
Ever Onward!!!!

Appendix 2

Developing the Capacity to Work with Young Fathers

Alison Loughlin

The Why and How of Building Capacity for Work with Fathers

Alison Loughlin
Director
Parents Advice Centre

1

Reasons for not working with Fathers ...

- Already committed to 'traditional' events
- After-thought and outside of strategic plan
- Would require too much effort / planning
- No funding or resources
- Would it work?
- Negative images of fathers
- Positive contribution of fathers?!?

2

The Trouble with Men ...

- Die earlier than women
- Fail in education
- Die from treatable illnesses
- More likely to die from accidents
- Victims of violent crimes
- More likely to die from suicide ...

3

Fathers: The Myths ...

- Fathers aren't really interested
- Only mothers are biologically programmed to respond to babies
- Fathers don't possess the right skills
- Parent-craft courses for fathers are a waste of time
- Men don't want to spend time with their children

4

Lessons to be Learned ...

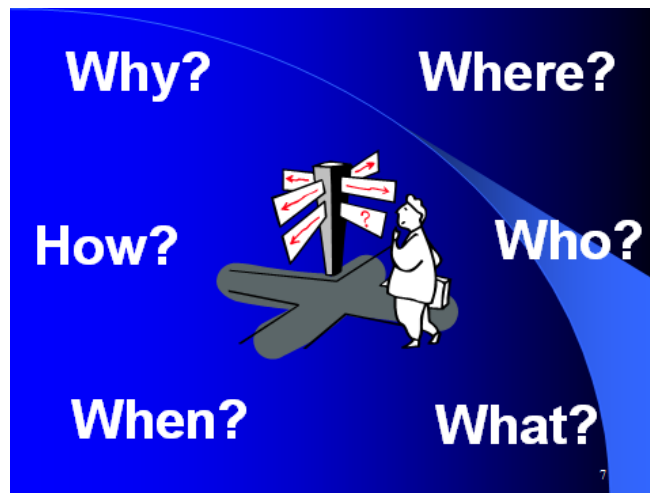
- Over-intellectualise too much
- Assume too much
- Look to 'experts' to tell us what to think and what to do
- Commonsense NOT Rocket Science

5

What Good Are Dads? ...

- Fathering most important part of lives
- Anorexic/bulimic girls often have poor or distant relationships with their fathers
- Children better at making friends, perform better at school, higher IQ scores
- Reinforce daughters' self-esteem
- Delinquency most common in boys whose fathers spent little time with them ...

6



Aim of Kick Start ...

Provide a seven month package of ...

- Training
- Support
- Networking
- Reflection
- Practical Action

... to increase quantity and quality of work

8

- Briefing Session for Managers
- Organisational Review
- Three Training Days ...
 - The Why of Working with Fathers
 - The How of Working with Fathers
 - The What of Working with Fathers
- Support Day – Practical Project Planning
- Father's Day Project
- Report Back / Presentation Planning
- Presentation Morning

9

Issues Kick Start Addresses:

- One off short training course
- Organisational culture
- Flavour of the month
- Tick box / bums on seats
- Fathers' exclusion
- One size fits all

Outcomes

- Increased understanding of father and their experience of fatherhood
- Increased awareness of personal attitudes and values in relation to fathers and fathering
- Knowledge about contribution to children's development
- Skills and ideas for working with fathers
- Identification of the barriers and obstacles to the inclusion of father and new work with fathers

Outcomes

- Cultural change across the whole organisation
- Ways of becoming a more father friendly organisation
- New contacts and opportunities for networking with people doing similar work
- Increased funding and expenditure on work with fathers

Conclusion

The Kick Start Reports for the last five years are available from

www.parentsadvicecentre.org

Or

Alison Loughlin

Alison@pachelp.org

00442890310891

Appendix 3

Workshop 1: Life Skills and Young Mothers

Workshop Presentation

1. Social Support for Teen Parents

Emotional support is only one part of the support needed for work with teen parents. Support also involves giving guidance, social reinforcement, practical assistance with tasks of daily living and social stimulation. The Teen Parents Support programme delivers support across all these areas. As we have seen it helps teen parents in all arrears of their lives: health, relationships, social welfare, accommodation, education and training, child development, parenting and childcare. Good social support systems are extremely necessary in the lives of teen parents. Various studies have shown the positive benefits. For example:

- They can play a protective role mitigating the effects of stress and other risk factors
- They have been correlated with competent maternal behaviour
- Mothers with good social supports show feelings of love towards their infants
- They feel fulfilled in the role of mother and can influence the infant's attachment security
- They are less likely to display angry and punitive behaviours towards their child.

However, additional stress can be caused to the teen parent through non supportive, conflictual or interfering interactions.

Who supports teen parents?

Family: Teen parents who live with parents or relatives are more likely to return to school, graduate and get employment.

Partner and partner's family: This can be hugely beneficial as long as relations are good

Friends: Friends can be a good support but we have found that the teen parent can often feel isolated from friends as their friends do not understand their new responsibilities and how restricted they now are.

Schools: home school liaison teachers, School Completion Programmes

Family Support Services: e.g. Teen Parents Support Programmes

Social Support groups: e.g. mother and baby groups

Teen Parents need a lot of extra support in their new role as they have little life skills and now need to deal with many different services and professionals:

- Hospitals: attending antenatal clinic and classes, midwives, doctors, social workers
- Public Health Nurses, Community Welfare Officers
- Local councils, regarding accommodation etc.
- Social Welfare , charities like St. Vincent de Paul
- Paying bills and operating a budget
- Back to Education applications.

What have the Teen Parents Support Programmes found works with Teen Parents?

In relation to teen parents, what seems to be of huge benefit, in addition to one-to-one support is the idea of group support. Bringing teen parents together regularly in a group means they have a place to come where they can identify with other young people in the same position as themselves. Group support becomes peer support where teen parent share their experiences and what has worked for them and what has not.

Teen parents often choose not to attend mainstream support group as they feel 'on show' and outnumbered. Offering childcare during a group so the teen parent can fully relax is also an incentive to attend. Allowing teen parents to have an input in the group programme and how it is run is beneficial

Examples of programme ideas:

MABS (re budgeting and financial advice), Cookery (simple meals that are easily planned, prepared and cost little), parenting, sex education, fun sessions, pampering sessions, feeding and weaning, information sessions on social welfare entitlements, and legal issues (shared parenting, access, guardianship, registering the birth etc.).

2. Personal Development

What is personal Development?

Personal development is known also known as self development, self improvement and personal growth. Unknownst to most of us we personally develop on a daily basis. Personal development is

- Understanding the power of our thoughts
- Improving our confidence
- Being assertive
- Self-appreciation
- Practicing self-talk and self belief techniques (& many more)

Therefore we work from a holistic approach i.e. the mind, body, spirit and heart.

Understanding Personal Development Further

A teenager's life can often be turbulent, stressful; they can feel under pressure and socially unaccepted. To add to that when teens become mums or dads the pregnancy can be daunting, they not only have to deal with their teen years but frequently their stress levels increase. It feels like the end of the road and that there's no light at the end of the tunnel. When teens present themselves they present many 'faces' i.e. at home, in school, as a friend, socially and although there are common threads of who he/she is a lot of the time they don't present how they are really. In the TPSP experience teen parents struggle with verbalising what's '*actually going on*'. At times they are appearing quite high – like they know everything - and at other times it's evident that their esteem and confidence is very low. Anxieties can range from them not feeling good enough, not fitting in anymore, difficulties living in the family home and having to grow up much quicker to not being able to return to education because of lack of childcare and the cost of childcare.

Relationship with the TPSP

A relationship is built on trust with the teen parent. The spirit of working with teen parents is working with them on "*Learning to be assertive and believe in themselves as this will help enormously with them facing challenges and will greatly improve on their sense of self*"

The TPSP personal development techniques are done with the teen parent though one-to-one contact, drop-in groups, STEPS personal development programme, coaching sessions, teen

parent groups, peer support groups, general group work i.e. sexual health, parenting, creativity programmes and so on.

TPSP Personal Development Frame Work

When teen parents seek supports such as

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| • Information on Social Welfare | - | OPFP form filling, FIS etc |
| • MABS | - | Money advice |
| • Housing
list etc | - | Rent Allowance, RAS, housing |

there is clear evidence of outputs.

However, when it comes to personal development it can hard to see or measure the development of a teen parent's personal growth. It can often take months, even years, before change is evident and at times maturity assists with the development.

The TPSP interventions are individual and needs led and aware that any sort of development requires a frame-work. An individual often functions as the primary judge of improvement but validation of objective improvement more often than not requires assessments using standard criteria. For that reason the TPSP frameworks include:

- Setting goals
- Benchmarks i.e. measurements for their assessments
- Progress is discussed along the way
- Milestones are celebrated and documented
- A feedback system to provide information on changes takes place
- Consistent reviewing
- Ongoing encouragement to grow
- Participants are challenged.

This is done in collaboration with the teen parents and although it sounds technical and complicated, it's done in an informal and non-intrusive way

3. Communication Skills

Communication is defined as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour.

Why are communication skills vital to a teen parent?

- New phase in life – fast track to adulthood (without milestones)
- To get a point across to professionals/family in a non-threatening way
- Less stress if they can do above/listen to above
- Independence – not asking/depending on parent/agency to deal with correspondence
- Preventing 'head in the sand' syndrome- problems worsening due to fear/ lack of confidence of dealing with agency– snowballing effect.

There are mainly three types of communication skills:

a) expressive skills, b) listening skills and c) skills for managing the overall process of communication. The basic fundamental of all these types of communication is emotional skills.

Words cause chemical reactions in our minds. The things we say or hear said to us, particularly the words used, cause us to feel certain ways about things and react in certain ways to certain circumstances.

In terms of teenagers, especially teenage parents, emotions are a key element. For example, a teen mum experiencing a crisis pregnancy or just after having a baby will be very emotional and overwhelmed with their new responsibilities. Therefore having to deal with various government departments/ agencies during this time can be a daunting task, taking into account that the protocols and jargon used can be challenging for most people!

TPSP staff will guide and mentor teen parents through this maze, by working with them on an individual basis, to explain each area/service/agency to them. Many teen parents may use a confident attitude to mask their fear, which may come across as rude to others. They often feel that agency and service employees are *'looking down on them'* or *'don't like them'*, when in fact, they are just doing their job in a professional capacity. It is our job to empower the teen parent to get their point across in a coherent and confident manner. We do this by accompanying teen parents to their meetings or by 'role play' to prepare them.

While coping with a change in their relationships in their lives such as:

- **Other parent**-organising access/custody/guardianship/maintenance, new stress on relationship **or** dealing with break-up of a relationship and fallout.
- **New partner/other parent's new partner**-dealing with emotions of other parent in a new relationship **or** introducing baby to new partners.
- **Grandparents, own family, other parent's family** -living in the family home – routines, different opinions on parenting, over- crowding, other grandparents, access etc.
- **Extended family**-siblings etc.
- **Friends**-change in friendships, not as free, possible new friends who have babies.

Teen parents must deal with some or all of the following

1. Hospitals-maternity hospital, ante-natal classes, check-ups during pregnancy, childhood illness and accidents.

2. Public health nurse/midwife/GP.

3. Local Health Centre -check-ups/vaccinations.

4. CWO (community welfare officer or 'relieving officer', usually based in local Health Centres)

- to apply for the maternity clothing allowance, to apply for allowance for cot and buggy, to apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance while awaiting [the One-Parent Family Payment](#) from social welfare **or** to apply for the rent allowance.

5. Department of Social Welfare -When applying for the One-Parent Family Payment/Back to Education Payment/Jobseekers allowance/Fuel Allowance/Child Benefit. For example, they must meet with a Social Welfare official before having the One-Parent Family Payment approved.

6. HSE-Medical card application for mother and baby; register the birth of child in order to receive birth certificate (need this for application for One-Parent Family Payment, Child Benefit and Housing Application for County/City Council).

7. Housing - Complete a Housing Application to County/City Council; apply to the CWO for Rent Allowance ; deal with landlords; organise household bills etc.; organise the household benefits

8. Social workers-In the maternity hospital, the local social work team, family support worker and residential care staff

9. Crèche manager/staff -Visiting crèches, settling baby in, keeping up with payments

10. Legal Personnel - Issues over access/custody/guardianship/maintenance, application for free legal aid, meetings with their solicitor, attending family court and abiding by court orders/ appealing a court order (<http://www.flac.ie>)

11. School/College - Dealing with principal, teachers, if pregnant and in second level, organise home tuition with the school, explain their situation and possible change in timetables and applying for third level grants

12. Support Services - Teen Parents Support Programme, Young Mothers Groups, Youth Groups and Addiction services , MABS (Money Advice Bureau) and St. Vincent De Paul

13. Counselling /mental health professionals - Crisis pregnancy counselling, counselling to deal with past issues and counselling to deal with current life changes

Resources we use:

- www.medicalcard.ie
- www.welfare.ie – to download forms and find your local office
- <http://www.flac.ie>
[http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration/Local Authorities/ list of county/city councils](http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration/LocalAuthorities/list_of_county/city_councils)
- http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/PrimaryCare/Health_Centres/

4. Independent Living Skills

I consider Independent Living Skills to be:

- **Budgeting Skills** (Dealing with an income)
- **Cooking Skills** (Need this to provide meals for their baby)
- **Health and Safety** in the home (Child Safety)
- **Routines** (They are now managing their child's routine)
- **Boundary Setting** (Either within their family home or in their own accommodation) For example, at home with their parents, they need to be contributing to the household, asserting themselves as parents, and also asserting themselves with their friends re socialising as a parent with responsibilities. In their own accommodation, it would be mostly around their friends and visitors.
- **Tenancy Sustainment** (if in their own accommodation) For example, managing visitors, parties, etc. Managing bills and not ignoring them if they can't afford them. Decision making comes into this, for example, prioritising an ESB Bill instead of buying a new pair of shoes. Issue re private rented sector in that there are no pre-tenancy courses here like in some Local Authorities of Social Housing organisations, so the TPSP would go through all this information with them to try and prepare them for independent living. We explain the process involved with rent allowance, deposits, direct debits, bank accounts, household budget and post office payments, meter readings, etc.

Resources we use:

HSE Family Support Service – For those needing a lot of support. We have close links with our local service, jointly providing a support package to young parents.

MABS – www.mabs.ie

There is a new pilot programme starting in Finglas. (MABS are designing a new Training Pack, specifically for use with teen parents, as it needs to be presented in a dynamic, user friendly way. We would refer a lot of young parents to MABS for help but the service is really busy and with this Pack we will be presenting the information ourselves. This will hopefully prevent them from having to be referred to the service in the first place by giving them a set of tools re budgeting skills.

Final Note:

Teaching young parents essential Life Skills can prevent them getting into difficulty and it is done simply by giving them the information they need and providing them with a set of tools to use. The young parent is therefore empowered with confidence to make decisions for themselves and to be able to act independently. In order to provide a good quality service to young parents, you need to be willing to pool resources as professionals and work along side other agencies.

Appendix 4

Workshop 2: Teen Pregnancy - The unique needs of teen parents and their families

Workshop Summary and Schedule

Aim

- To promote awareness among service providers that a teenage pregnancy and parenthood can create unique needs for the young person and his/her family.
- To encourage a 'whole family' approach when devising supports for young parents.

Description

We acknowledge that a teen pregnancy in the family can impact on both the young parent and his/her whole family, in particular the new grandparents. We will explore the issues that can arise with a teenage pregnancy which are not normally associated with a pregnancy or parenthood at a later stage in life. We will look at the unique needs arising for young parents and their families. We will examine how families can best be supported by service providers involved in the care of the young parent.

Workshop Schedule

Welcome and Introductions

Give an overview of the workshop schedule

Give the rationale for the workshop

Mention that the Research *Grandparents Before Time* highlighted that a teen pregnancy within a family affects the young person and his or her family in a different way to a pregnancy at a later stage in life.

Identifying the unique needs

Read out the example profiles of a pregnancy situation for a **28 year old** (the national average age of a mother for first births) and one for a **16 year old**.

1. Ask the group to list the main issues arising in the two situations using the Worksheets provided
2. What are the main differences?
3. How would such differences impact on the life of the 16 year old and his/her family?

Briefly present the selection of slides of the *Grandparents Before Time* Research flagging the areas that have not already been mentioned.

How can families be supported?

In small groups of 4/5

1. Identify what that support could be provided to a young parent's family.
2. Determine how your service could provide that support

Briefly highlight what supports the TPSP offers

Give research handout

Review main points of the workshop for feeding back

Close

Profile 1 Pregnancy/Parenthood at 28 years old

Angela is 28 years old. She is living with John who is 29. They have been in a relationship for 4 years and living together for the last 2 years. They have talked about getting married in the future, they might even get engaged at Christmas. They rent an apartment. The rent is manageable because they are both earning. Angela has been working in Marks and Spencers as a supervisor for nearly 2 years. John is an electrician.

Angela and John had thought they might have children in the future and had joked about being a Mum and Dad. However, they were not planning to have children for a few years. When Angela finds out she is pregnant she is shocked. When she tells John he is also shocked but reassures her they'll manage. He will take all the work he can get so they will have enough money put away to get what the baby needs. When they start to talk about it they begin to feel happy and excited about the baby. They agree to wait for a few weeks to get used to the idea themselves and to be sure everything is ok, before they tell people. Angela makes an appointment to see her doctor and starts her ante-natal care.

Two weeks later Angela and John go around to Angela's parents' house to tell them the news. Her parents are delighted, they had hoped the couple might have got married first, but they decide "*aren't they both sensible with good jobs and its the first grandchild in the family, its great*". Angela's parents know that John's parents will be delighted too; they are very fond of his mum and dad; they've met them at lots of family occasions. They think John will be a great Dad; they've seen the way he is with his sister's children. When Angela's 17 year old sister comes home from school and hears the news she is over the moon that she is going to be an auntie. She promises she will come over to their apartment to baby-sit.

Once Angela has her first scan and knows everything is ok, she tells her friends. They are delighted for her, telling her she'll be a real yummy mummy. Several of their friends have children, they will be able to meet up to do things together. Her friends offer her baby equipment and some tips around her pregnancy. Her manager at work tells her to apply for maternity benefit in the next few weeks and explains her leave entitlement.

As time goes on they start to gather stuff for the baby. They decide not to go on holiday this year so that they won't be too stretched with all the stuff they have to buy. They might even have to change the car. Things will be tight, but Angela will take her full maternity leave and then go back to work. They will check out the crèche that Angela's friend uses, it is expensive but they should manage. John would be able to drop the baby off on his way to work and she could do the evening pick up. They will be a real little family.

Profile 2 Pregnancy/parenthood at 16 years of age

Ciara is 16 years old. She has been meeting Eoin who is 19, for nearly 2 months off and on. Ciara is in 5th year and hoping to go to college when she finishes school. Eoin has just started a FÁS course. They meet at weekends usually with a gang from the town, maybe a few cans in the park or sometimes there's a party in someone's house. Ciara lives at home with her parents and her 14 year old brother and 9 year old sister. Ciara gets on well enough with her parents but they do row about her going out.

Ciara hasn't told her parents that she is seeing Eoin; she wouldn't really tell them things like that. They've never met Eoin. He lives at the other side of the town and they wouldn't know his family. Ciara earns some money from babysitting for neighbours about once a month. Eoin gets a training allowance from his FÁS course. When Ciara found out she was pregnant she was horrified. Her parents would go mental. She tells her two best friends and they don't know what to say, but eventually say *'not to worry, it will be grand'*.

Ciara doesn't see Eoin the following week and then she hears he has been with another girl down in the park. She meets him two weeks later and tells him she is pregnant. He says *"What do you want me to do about it? I thought you were using something"*. He won't answer her texts or calls after that. She hears he is going out with the other girl now. She still hasn't told anybody else and tries to just pretend it is not happening. She sees a couple of Eoin's friends in the town. They start laughing and pointing at her. At school people seem to know. Ciara feels everyone is talking about her. Her two best friends tell her not to mind everybody else.

As the weeks go by Ciara tries to put the pregnancy out of her head. She covers up with baggy tops and spends a lot of time in her room. Eventually when she is about 5 months gone she decides she should tell her parents before someone else does. Ciara tells her mother first. Her mother gets really upset and cries. She has never seen her mother cry before. Her mother tells her she is so disappointed in her, that she trusted her and now Ciara has let them all down. Her mother tells her father and he gets really angry and yelling that she has ruined her life and calling her stupid. He tells her not to even think about going out at weekends again.

They don't talk to her for ages. Her brother comes home from school one day and says that everyone is talking about her and they are slagging him about having a slut for a sister. He won't talk to her now either.

Ciara's mother takes her to the maternity hospital for a check up. At the hospital, she has to meet a social worker because of her age. He is really nice and doesn't make her feel stupid for getting pregnant. He does tell her that he will have to notify a social worker with the HSE about her pregnancy and that there is a possibility that the Guards will be involved. She knows her parents will go crazy when they hear that.

When her mum calms down eventually she really is great. She helps her sort out her next hospital visits and doctor appointments. She contacts places to find out if Ciara is entitled to get any money or benefits when the baby comes. When they find out that a crèche place would cost nearly €200 a week, Ciara worries that she will not be able to go back to school. Her mum says she will give up her part-time job to look after the baby for her as she really wants her to finish school. Her Dad says he will persuade her brother to swap his room as it is bigger, so that there will be room for a cot. Ciara thinks she would be lost without her family.

Presentation Slides

Findings

Disclosure Stage (cont)

A child with a child:

- The idea of their teenage daughter being physically pregnant and parenting, while still looking so child-like was particularly traumatising.

"She will be a child with a child. What is she going to do with her life?" (Maternal-grandmother-06)

Uncertainty and isolation:

"It was an extremely private matter, especially if she was going to have an abortion. Not telling anyone was extremely isolating (Maternal-grandmother-03)

Findings

Disclosure Stage (Cont)

Paternal-grandparents :

- Disconnected from the pregnancy.

"I want my son to be a good father. I think he will. He is doing his best now but he is not included by the social at all" (Paternal- grandmother-2)

- Perceived fatherhood as being a protective factor against more negative behaviour.

"calmed him and made him be responsible- (paternal-grandmother-11).

- Questioned the maturity levels of their sons.

"I want him to be supportive and standby his partner, but he is so immature" (Paternal-grandfather-13)

Findings

Grandparents Experience in the Ante-natal and Short Term Post-natal Stage (cont).....

Increased Anxiety and Stress for Grandparents:

- Concern for their daughters' health during the pregnancy
- Their ability to cope with parenting at such a young age.
- The challenge of keeping their daughters motivated to stay in school -particular issue for grandparents who had specific aspirations for their daughter's future.

Findings

Grandparents Experience in the Ante-natal and Short Term Post-natal Stage (cont).....

- Concern re suitability of partner.

"She was going to split from him before the pregnancy but she couldn't. The child is going to make it harder to finish up now as he has a connection to her" (Maternal-grandmother-07)

- Connected to a relatively "unknown" family, by their grandchild.

- Some grandmothers generally felt they were more worried and stressed than their teenagers, anticipating worry even when things were calm.

Findings

Grandparents Experience in the Ante-natal and Short Term Post-natal Stage (cont).....

Parenting Teenage Parents:

- Grandparents questioned their own parenting style and ability.
- Struggled to find the right balance in relation to discipline- particularly if they were in school and a routine was needed.

"I'd say to myself and I'd be crying about it saying....why do I have to be so hard on her? But I was easier up until then and look where it got her!" (Grandparent-01)

- Heightened awareness of their daughter's behaviour. Trust had been breached and would be difficult to restore.

Other Grandparents' Experiences at the ante-natal and short term post natal stage.

Paternal-grandparents:

- If the couple split up in the future, contact with their grandchild could be severed.
- Single fathers in Ireland have no automatic guardianship rights over their child. concern. They felt the balance of power was very much on the mothers' side.
- Reported feeling a sense of being "disconnected" from the pregnancy and birth.

Long Term Challenges for Grandparents (cont)

Transition to the Grandparent Role:

The idea of being a grandmother did not always register straight away.

"It got a bit annoying when people get excited about me being a grandmother at 32. The role of the parent is a bigger role in this case" (Maternal-grandmother-11)

- Found it difficult at times, not to comment or get involved in the way their daughter cared for child.
- Their role as grandparent became blurred at times.
- This had the potential to cause tensions in the family.

Long Term Challenges for Grandparents (cont).

Accommodation- To move out or not:

- Some grandparents reported feeling the strain of having "two mothers in the house".

"After 7 months, I couldn't take it anymore..... I was crying so much. I said before we start hating each other you need to move out and get a house". (Maternal-grandmother-03).

"If she didn't have the baby we would just cut her loose, but we are worried that the child would suffer"(Maternal-grandmother-08)

- Co-residency for some grandparents did not present a problem when the teenager and her child blended in with the rest of the family and there was very clear boundaries and roles.

Long Term Challenges for Grandparents (cont).

Inter-family Conflict:

- Grandparents were fearful that conflict between the teenagers' families could result in the child being used as a bargaining tool.
- Access arrangements, maintenance payments, parenting style or ability, or feelings about the other partner, were the main issues.
- This conflict affected the grandparents' long term peace of mind and they needed support to deal with these types of situations as they emerged.

Long term challenges for grandparents (cont).

- Most grandparents acknowledged how difficult it was for their teenager to balance the conflicting roles of being a parent and a teenager at the same time.

Sharing the Workload:

- Expectation that the teenager should now be able to act responsibly. The grandmother's frustration came with the realisation that this did not always happen.

Implications for Practice.

- Teen parents can be a difficult target group to engage. It is therefore practical for those working in the front line of healthcare provision to encompass grandparents (maternal and paternal) as a channel to access teen parents.
- Healthy eating interventions, smoking cessation, sexual health, parenting skills can also all be indirectly targeted at young parents, through these grandparents.
- Grandparents physical and psychological well being is often at risk, as they juggle roles and responsibilities in challenging circumstances.
- Work with grandparents needs to be focused and flexible, to build on their pre-existing skills.

Appendix 5

Workshop 4 : Parenting Issues for Teenage Parents

Resources

Chance, Halligan. 2004 **Involving Fathers in Family Support – A Practice Tool.** Barnardos, Dublin. e-mail: info@barnardos.ie www.barnardos.ie

Cherish, (1999). **Moving On – A Resource Manual for Working with Single Parents.** Cherish, Dublin. E-mail: info@onefamily.ie www.onefamily.ie

Combat Poverty Agency, 1995. **Developing Facilitation Skills.** Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin.

Family Caring Trust, 1989. **What Can A Parent Do?** Family Caring Trust, Newry.

Family Caring Trust, 1989. **What Can The Parent of a Teenager Do?** Family Caring Trust, Newry.

ISPCC, 2008. **Globe – All Ireland Programme for Immigrant Parents (IPIP) Toolkit**, ISPCC, Dublin. www.ispcc.ie

ISPCC, **Handle with Care – Advice on handling infants safely**, ISPCC, Dublin www.ispcc.ie

ISPCC, **Get Ready – Preparing Yourself for Your Baby**, ISPCC, Dublin www.ispcc.ie

ISPCC, **Tips to Beat Stress – A broadsheet for parents on recognizing and controlling stress**, ISPCC, Dublin www.ispcc.ie

ISPCC, **Avoiding Cry-sis: Advice for parents in coping with and understanding a crying baby**, ISPCC, Dublin www.ispcc.ie

National Youth Council of Ireland, 2009. **Access All Areas – A Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector**, NYCI, Dublin www.youth.ie

Sharry, Hampson, Fanning, 2009. **Parents Plus - The Early Years Programme.** Parents Plus, Dublin www.parentsplus.ie

Sharry, Fitzpatrick, (2009). **Parents Plus - The Children's Programme.** Parents Plus, Dublin www.parentsplus.ie

TPSP Limerick, 2003. **Guidelines for Best Practice – Supporting Students who are Pregnant and those who are Parents within our Education System.** Parent Support Programme Limerick, Limerick. pspl@lssc.ie www.lssc.ie

Women's Participation Working Group, NYCI, 1993. **Sugar and Spice – A Resource Book for Working with Young Women.** National Youth Council of Ireland. Dublin.

The Children's Society, 1994. **Education for Parenthood – A Resource Pack for Young People.** The Children's Society, London

Szirom and Dyson, 1986. **Greater Expectations – A Source Book for Working with Girls and Young Women.** LDA, Australia.

Crisis Pregnancy Agency & HSE, **Responding to Crisis Pregnancy – Information and Service Directory for Community and Health Professionals.** CPA & HSE, Dublin
info@crisispregnancy.ie : www.crisispregnancy.ie

Treoir, 2010. **Information Pack for Parents who are not married to each other.** Treoir, Dublin info@treoir.ie www.treoir.ie

Treoir, 2010. **The Young Parent Survival Guide.** Treoir, Dublin : info@treoir.ie
www.treoir.ie

Treoir, 2004. **Being there for them –A booklet for grandparents of children whose parents are not married to each other.** Treoir, Dublin info@treoir.ie www.treoir.ie

BOOKS

Sharry, J, (2008) *“Positive Parenting: Bringing up Responsible, Well-Behaved and Happy Children”*, Veritas Books, UK.

Steven P. Shelov, M.D (2004). *“Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5.* The American Academy of Pediatrics. Canada

Webster-Stratton (2001) *“The Incredible Years: Parents, Teachers and Child Training Series”*, New York, Haworth Press.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Ante- Natal Classes – Available at Local Maternity Hospital and TPSP Projects www.hse.ie

Parent Craft Classes – Available at Local Maternity Hospital www.hse.ie

My Personal Health Record – Distributed by local HSE Public Health Nurses based at local HSE Community Health Centre www.hse.ie

Appendix 6

Biographical Notes on Speakers & Chairpersons

Professor Pat Dolan is joint founder and Director of the Child and Family Research Centre and of the Higher Diploma/Masters Degree in Family Support Studies. For over 20 years he has had an active interest at worker, service manager, academic and research levels in Family Support and community based interventions in helping adolescents. In October 2008, he was appointed UNESCO Chairholder for the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement at NUI, Galway. The UNESCO Chair delivers a comprehensive programme of work with the objective of promoting civic engagement and leadership skills among children and youth by providing relevant expertise in research, teaching, policy and good practice.

Sheila Lawlor has been the Principal Social Worker in Galway University Hospitals for the last number of years. She did her undergraduate training in UCD and postgraduate training in Edinburgh University and is a University Tutor in NUIG. She also holds qualifications in Family Law, Employment Law, Health Care Management and Health Law. Sheila has worked as the Western Health Board Children's Officer, as a St. Nicholas Adoption Society Worker and has also worked in medical, maternity, research, foster care and generic social work. She has worked in Edinburgh University with Professor Trisiolitis who was the international authority on Adoption tracing. Sheila was a board member of Treoir for many years. Last year she was the Chair of the Allied Health Professions at Galway University Hospitals.

Dr Aisling Gillen has 15 years of clinical experience working as a Speech & Language Therapist in a variety of settings. She has worked as a Counsellor for Special Needs and in Quality Assurance. As a Disability Service Manager in Donegal, she headed the development of a 10-year strategy for the development of Disability Services in Donegal. She worked for 5 years as a Regional General Manager for Children's Services in the HSE West. Aisling is currently working as a Specialist in Family Support in the new Directorate of Children and Family Social Services in the HSE. Over the past two years she has been working to encourage the development of Children's Services Committees within the HSE, in conjunction with the *Office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA)*.

David Simpson is the Co-ordinator of **Promoting Fatherhood**. He has worked with fathers for thirteen years developing resources and courses, including *What Good Are Dads?* for Donegal TPSP. He also trains organisations to become more father friendly

Alison Loughlin has been employed as the Director for the Parenting Forum NI for 8 years, a project based within the Parents Advice Centre. She completed an MSC in Voluntary Sector Management and holds 2 CIPD Diplomas in Personnel, Management and Training. Over the past 16 years she has been employed in the voluntary and community sectors by Relate NI as Education and Training Manager and Prince's Trust Volunteers as Project Manager. Through this work she has gained extensive experience and knowledge of working with parents, children and young people. She is currently a Trustee of Parenting UK and a panel member of Life Long Learning UK. She has been directly involved in the implementation of National Occupational Standards and Qualification on Working with Parents and the Europarents project for the exchange of information on best practice models in 12 other countries.

Marie Collins is a qualified General Nurse and Midwife. Marie's background is largely in Primary Health Care working in the Developing World as a volunteer in Kenya and also in Gorey as a practice nurse. Marie has been working with Barnardos TPSP in North Wexford since it began in May 2009. Before joining Barnardos Marie worked with Gorey School Completion Programme.

Rosemary Grant is the Principal Social Worker in the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital. Rosemary qualified as a Social Worker in Trinity College Dublin and has spent all of her working life as a medical social worker in the area of obstetrics and paediatrics. Rosemary has been closely involved with the TPSP since it was established and has chaired the TPSP National Advisory Committee since 2000.

She was also a member of the Board of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency between 2000 and 2009.

Appendix 7

List of Registered Delegates

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Toner	Rosie	IFPA	rtoner@ifpa.ie
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Tuohy	Orla	Lifestart Foundation	lifestartot@eircom.net
Uí Fhlannchadha	Alma	HSLO Scoil Phobail Mhic Dara Carna	spmd@eircom.net
Walker Callaghan	Mary	Lifestart	lifestartnewtowncunngham@eircom.net

Walsh	Deirdre	Foróige	deirdre.walsh@foroige.ie
Walshe	Alma	HSCLO Boyne Community School	scaryteach2002@yahoo.com
Ward	Áine	IFPA	aine@ifpa.ie
Warde	Aoife	TPSP Galway	
Waters	Helen	Tuam Family Services	helen.waters@hse.ie
Waterstone	Aidan	National Specialist HSE	aidan.waterstone@hse.ie
Whelan	Anita	TPSP Coolock	senior.progs@dorasbui.org
Woodbyrne	Jenny	TPSP Wexford	jennifer.woodbyrne@barnardos.ie
Yacef	Amel	The Base Youth Centre, Ballyfermot	

Appendix 8

TPSP Contact Details

Dublin

**Ballyfermot,
Bluebell & Inchichore.**

E-mail: ciara.hoev@thebase.ie
Tel: 01-6546818 or 087-9950439

**Dublin 5, 13&17
Parts of Dublin 3& 9.**

E-mail: senior.progs@dorasbui.org
Tel: 01-8484811 or 087 2794983

**Drimnagh, Crumlin,
Dublin 24 &
Parts of Dublin 8.**

E-mail: esther.pugh@barnardos.ie
Tel: 01-4032081 or 086-8505503

Finglas.

E-mail: rebecca.moore@barnardos.ie
Tel: 01-8041765 or 087-9523924

Carlow/Kilkenny

E-mail: berniel@catherines.ie
Tel: 059-9138799

Cork

E-mail: tpspcork@eircom.net
Tel: 021-4222987 or 086-8278772
Web: www.teenparents.ie

Donegal

E-mail: tara.rowan@foroige.ie
michelle.maguire@foroige.ie
Tel: 074-9190141 or 086-8186345

Galway

E-mail: aileen.davies@hse.ie
Tel: 091 544960 or 085-7633235

Limerick

E-mail: martina.hogan@lssc.ie
Tel: 061 411643 or 086 6020578

Louth

E-mail: joannea.murphy@hse.ie
Tel: 041 9875273 or 087 2194641

North Wexford

E-mail: reidin.dunne@barnardos.ie
Tel: 053-9481014

National Co-ordinator Tel 01-6700167. E-mail: tpsp@treoir

Appendix 9

Workshop 5 : Supporting Young Parents in Education & Training

***Pathways of Care* documents**

MEDICAL • Pregnancy Testing, Advice & Counselling Services

Health Centres

Fahan Health Centre	074 93 60277
Buncrana Health Centre	074 93 61044
Quigley's Point Health Centre	074 93 83036
Primary Care Centre, Moville	074 93 82049
Health Centre, Carndonagh	074 93 74262
Millbrae Surgery, Carndonagh	074 93 74644
Malin Health Centre	074 9370637
Health Centre, Clonmany	074 93 76173
Health Centre, Newtowncunningham	074 91 56386
Dr. Bradley, Grant, Kennedy & O'Domhnaill, Buncrana	074 93 63611
Letterkenny IT Nurse; Hanna Glackin	074 91 86850

hanna.glackin@lyit.ie

Well Woman Clinic

Letterkenny Woman's Centre: Woman's Health and Family Planning Clinic 074 91 24985

www.lwc.ie

Antenatal Support

Geraldine Hanley: Antenatal Education Co-ordinator 074 91 25888
Lucy Dineen: Hospital Paediatric Social Worker 074 91 23608

geraldine.hanley@hse.ie

lucy.dineen@hse.ie

Positive Options: For list of organisations that offers free Crisis Pregnancy Counselling, information and support Text LIST to 50444

www.positiveoptions.ie

EDUCATION

Teen Parents Support Programme (Finn Valley, Letterkenny and Inishowen) See contact details in home section

School Completion Officers:

Marie Therese McDaid 086 312 8883
Sean Noonan 074 93 22928

Home School Liaison Officers:

Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana: Nuala Flynn 074 93 20768
Crana College, Buncrana: Rory O'Neill 074 93 61488
Carndonagh Community School: Elaine Meehan 074 93 74260
Moville Community College: Toni McCloskey 074 93 85988
Gael Cholaiste Chineál Eoghan, Buncrana: Eabha Ni Mhonachain 074 93 22350

Youth Reach - www.youthreach.ie

Buncrana: Jayne O'Donnell 074 93 62466
Glengad: Jayne O'Donnell 074 93 70004

jayneodonnell@donegalvec.ie

jayneodonnell@donegalvec.ie

Letterkenny IT - www.lyit.ie

Brian Mc Gonagle: Access Officer 074 91 86170
Roisin McCormack: Learning Support Tutor 074 91 86172

brian.mcgonagle@lyit.ie

roisin.mccormack@lyit.ie

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Teen Parents Support Programme (Finn Valley, Letterkenny and Inishowen) See contact details in home section

HSE Child Protection Team

Principal Social Worker: 074 91 23739
Social Work Office: Buncrana (covers Inishowen) 074 93 20420

Treoir: The National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children

1890 252 084 / 01 6700 120

info@treoir.ie / www.treoir.ie

Citizens Information Centre (National)

Buncrana 1890 777121
Carndonagh 074 93 63496
074 93 73741

www.citizensinformation.ie

Social Welfare Services Office

McCarter's Road, Ardaravan, Buncrana 074 93 20070 (local office)
St. Oliver Plunkett Road, Letterkenny 1890 400 400 ext 4480 (county head office)

Community Welfare Officers

Community Services Offices, Buncrana (main contact in Inishowen) 074 93 61044

Other Useful Contact Details

Donegal County Childcare Ltd 074 91 32416
Parentstop, Carndonagh 074 93 73493
Inishowen Family Action Network (IFAN), Shauna McClenaghan 074 93 62218

info@donegalchildcare.com / www.donegalchildcare.com

Youth Website on health/lifestyle
Sexual Health website for Young People

www.spunout.ie

www.cluedup.ie

www.cluedupparents.org

www.coombe.ie/mai

info@isands.ie / www.isands.ie

info@bluestackfoundation.com

info@snapireland.net / www.snapireland.net

buncrana@mabs.ie / www.mabs.ie

Fiona.Hardy@hse.ie

Sexual Health website for Parents
Miscarriage Association of Ireland

01 8735702

01 8726996

074 97 40828

Irish Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society

Bluestack Foundation (Special Needs)

S.N.A.P. - Special Needs Active Parents

MABS: Money, Advice & Budgeting Service

074 93 21856

Services to Refugee's and Asylum Seekers

074 9131391

Family Community and Personal Services:

Provides up to date information for parents, children, teenagers and families in the northwest

info@families.ie / www.families.ie

HOME

Teen Parents Support Programme: If you are a teen parent or grandparent and would like support or information please contact:

Michelle @ 086 818 6345 or Tara @ 086 837 1335. E- Mail donegaltpsp@gmail.com



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MEDICAL • Pregnancy Testing, Advice & Counselling Services

Health Centre

Well Woman Clinic's

Antenatal Support

Positive Options

For a list of organisations that offer free
Crisis Pregnancy Counselling, information and support.

Text LIST to 50444

www.positiveoptions.ie

EDUCATION

Teen Parents Support Programme. See contact details in home section

School Completion Officers:

Home School Liason Officers:

Youthreach - www.youthreach.ie

IT

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Teen Parents Support Programme. See contact details in home section

HSE Child Protection Team

Treoir: The National Federation of Services
for Unmarried Parents and their Children.

1890252084/ 016700120

info@treoir.ie / www.treoir.ie

Citizens Information Centre (National)

Lo call: 1890 777 121

www.citizensinformation.ie

Social Welfare Services Office - www.welfare.ie

Community Welfare Officers

Other Useful Contact Details

Miscarriage Association of Ireland
Irish Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society

**01 8735702
01 8726996**

**www.coombe.ie
info@isands.ie / www.isands.ie**

S.N.A.P - Special Needs Active Parents
Youth Website on Health & Lifestyle
Sexual Health website for Young people
Sexual Health website for Parents

**info@snapireland.net / www.snapireland.net
www.spunout.ie
www.cluedup.ie
www.clueduparents.org**

HOME

Teen Parents Support Programme: If you are a teen parent or grandparent and would like support or information please contact: 074 9190141
Tara @ 086 837 1335, Michelle @ 086 818 6345. E- Mail donegaltsp@gmail.com



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MEDICAL • Pregnancy Testing, Advice & Counselling Services

Health Centre

Millbrae Health Centre, Stranorlar
Dr. Forkans Helath Centre, Stranorlar
Lifford Health Centre
Cloghan Health Centre
Letterkenny IT Nurse: Hanna Glackin

074 91 31023
074 91 31344
074 91 41024
074 91 33031
074 91 86850

hanna.glackin@lyit.ie

Well Woman Clinic's

Letterkenny Women's Centre:
Women's Health and Family Planning Clinic

074 9124985

www.lwc.ie

Antenatal Support

Geraldine Hanley: Antenatal Education Co-ordinator
Lucy Dineen: Hospital Paediatric Social Worker

074 91 25888
074 91 23608

geraldine.hanley@hse.ie
lucy.dineen@hse.ie

Positive Options

For a list of organisations that offer free
Crisis Pregnancy Counselling, information and support.

Text LIST to 50444

www.positiveoptions.ie

EDUCATION

Teen Parents Support Programme (Finn Valley, Letterkenny and Inishowen) See contact details in home section

School Completion Officers:

Ronnie Halliday (Raphoe Area)

074 91 73874

Home School Liason Officers:

St. Columba's College, Stranorlar: Sr. Nuala Mullin

074 91 31246

Finn Valley College: Maria Clarke:

074 91 31684

Deele College, Raphoe: Noelle Ryan

074 91 45493

The Royal and Prior, Raphoe: Emily Bowles:

074 91 45389

Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Béal an Átha Móir: Fiona Ní Chnáimhshí

074 91 46133

Youthreach - www.youthreach.ie

Letterkenny: Breda Rodden
Lifford: Gillian Kennedy (Acting)

074 91 22585
074 91 42114

bredarodden@donegalvec.ie
liffordyouthreach@donegalvec.ie

Letterkenny IT - www.lyit.ie

Brian Mc Gonagle: Access Officer
Roisin McCormack: Learning Support Tutor

074 91 86170
074 91 86172

brian.mcgonagle@lyit.ie
roisin.mccormack@lyit.ie

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Teen Parents Support Programme (Finn Valley, Letterkenny and Inishowen) See contact details in home section

HSE Child Protection Team

Principal Social Worker
Donegal Town
Letterkenny

074 91 23739
074 97 23540
074 91 23770

Treoir: The National Federation of Services
for Unmarried Parents and their Children.

1890252084/ 016700120

info@treoir.ie / www.treoir.ie

Citizens Information Centre (National)

Letterkenny

Lo call: 1890 777 121
074 91 94281

www.citizensinformation.ie

Social Welfare Services Office - www.welfare.ie

St Oliver Plunkett Rd., Letterkenny (County Head Office)
Social Welfare Office: Ballybofey (Local Office)

1890 400 400 EXT 4480
074 91 30490

Community Welfare Officers

Community Care Offices Ballybofey

074 91 31391

Other Useful Contact Details

Donegal County Childcare Ltd
Donegal Youth Information Centre, Donegal Town
Parentstop, Letterkenny
Miscarriage Association of Ireland
Irish Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society
Bluestack Foundation (Special Needs)
S.N.A.P - Special Needs Active Parents
Youth Website on Health & Lifestyle
Sexual Health website for Young people
Sexual Health website for Parents
MABS: Money, Advice & Budgeting Service
Services to Refugee's and Asylum Seekers
Family Community and Personal Services:
Provides up to date information for parents, children, teenagers and families in the northwest

074 91 32416
074 97 23029
074 91 77249
01 8735702
01 8726996
074 97 40828

074 91 29909
074 9131391

info@donegalchildcare.com / www.donegalchildcare.com
yic@gmail.com / www.foroige.ie
helenjkelly@eircom.net
www.coombe.ie
info@isands.ie / www.isands.ie
info@bluestackfoundation.com
info@snapireland.net / www.snapireland .net
www.spunout.ie
www.cluedup.ie
www.cluedupparents.org
letterkenny@mabs.ie / www.mabs.ie
Fiona.Hardy@hse.ie

info@families.ie / www.families.ie

HOME

Teen Parents Support Programme: If you are a teen parent or grandparent and would like support or information please contact: 074 9190141
Tara @ 086 837 1335, Michelle @ 086 818 6345. E- Mail donegaltsp@gmail.com



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MEDICAL • Pregnancy Testing, Advice & Counselling Services

Medical Centres

Sally Medical Practice, Justice Walsh Road, Letterkenny	074 91 28180	
Park Health Centre, Ballyraine, Letterkenny	074 91 29393	
Dr. Birmingham, Ballyraine Rd., Letterkenny	074 91 24559	
Ramelton Health Centre	074 91 51468	
Letterkenny IT Nurse; Hanna Glackin	074 91 86850	hanna.glackin@lyit.ie

Well Woman Clinic's

Letterkenny Women's Centre:		
Women's Health and Family planning clinic	074 91 24985	www.lwc.ie

Antenatal Support

Geraldine Hanley: Antenatal Education Co-ordinator,	074 91 25888	geraldine.hanley@hse.ie
Lucy Dineen: Hospital Paediatric Social Worker	074 91 23608	lucy.dineen@hse.ie

Positive Options: For a list of organisations that offer free Crisis Pregnancy Counselling, Information & support

Text LIST to 50444

www.positiveoptions.ie

EDUCATION

Teen Parents Support Programme (Finn Valley, Letterkenny and Inishowen) See contact details in home section

School Completion Officer:

Paddy Hannigan	074 9121047/ 086 8103973	paddyhannigan@donegalvec.ie
Errigal College, Letterkenny		
Mulroy College, Milford		

Home School Liason Officers

Loreto Convent, Letterkenny	074 91 21850
St Eunan's College, Letterkenny	074 91 21143
Errigal College, Letterkenny - Eileen Maguire, HSLO	074 91 21047
Coláiste Ailigh, Highroad, Letterkenny	074 91 25943

Youthreach - www.youthreach.ie

Breda Rodden, Letterkenny	074 91 22585	bredarodden@donegalvec.ie
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Letterkenny IT - www.lyit.ie

Brian McGonagle, Access officer	074 91 86170	brian.mcgonagle@lyit.ie
Roisin McCormack, Learning Support Tutor	074 91 86172	roisin.mccormack@lyit.ie

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Teen Parents Support Programme (Finn Valley, Letterkenny and Inishowen) See contact details in home section

HSE Child Protection Team

Principal Social Worker	074 91 23739
Social Work Office, Letterkenny	074 91 23770

Treoir: The National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children

1890 252084/ 01 6700120 info@treoir.ie / www.treoir.ie

Citizens Information Centre (National)

Letterkenny Lo call: 1890 777 121 www.citizensinformation.ie

Letterkenny 074 91 94281

Social Welfare Services Office:

St Oliver Plunkett Rd., Letterkenny (county head office) 1890 400 400 EXT 4480 www.welfare.ie

Community Welfare Officers

Community Care Offices, Ballybofey. 074 91 31391

Other Useful Contact Details

Donegal County Childcare Ltd	074 91 32416	info@donegalchildcare.com / www.donegalchildcare.com
Family Action Letterkenny, Lisa McKemey	074 91 77248	lisamcdaly@hotmail.com / www.familyaction.ie
Letterkenny Youth Information Centre	074 91 29640	yicletterkenny@eircom.net / www.donegalyouthservice.ie/yic/
Parentstop Letterkenny	074 91 77249	helenjkelly@eircom.net
Miscarriage Association of Ireland	01 8735702	www.coombe.ie
Irish Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society	01 8726996	info@isands.ie / www.isands.ie
Bluestack Foundation (Special Needs)	074 97 40828	info@bluestackfoundation.com
S.N.A.P. - Special Needs Active Parents		info@snapireland.net / www.snapireland.net
Youth Website on Health & Lifestyle		www.spunout.ie
Sexual Health website for Young people		www.cluedup.ie
Sexual Health website for Parents		www.cluedupparents.org
MABS: Money, Advice & Budgeting Service	074 9129909	letterkenny@mabs.ie / www.mabs.ie
Services to Refugee's and Asylum Seekers	074 9131391	Fiona.Hardy@hse.ie
Family Community and Personal Services:		

Provides up to date information for parents, children, teenagers and families in the northwest

info@families.ie / www.families.ie

HOME

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Health Service Executive West



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Pathway of Care for Pregnant or Parenting Teenagers within the Education System

