

The Teen Parents Support Programme

Summary of Work 2019



Introduction

The Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) consists of eleven separate projects which are located throughout the country in a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations (see TPSP contact details at the end of this Summary). These projects are funded by Tusla and the HSE.

Each project offers interventions that promote and enhance the well-being of pregnant and parenting teens and their children. As part of an interagency approach to family support, TPSP staff begin their engagement with the young people at a critical early point of pregnancy/parenthood. They then work with them to build their capacity both as young parents and as adolescents moving towards early adulthood.

During 2019, the TPSP supported 697 young parents. This brings to 7,435 the number of young parents who, together with their children, partners and families, have received this service since the TPSP was established in 2000. One of the aspirations of the TPSP is that eventually all teen parents in Ireland will have access to this model of support.

The TPSP works with young people who become parents when they are aged 19 years or under and, where needed, supports them until their children are 2 years of age.

Support is offered in all areas of the young person's life – parenting, health, relationships, education, training, childcare, housing, social welfare entitlements, legal issues and anything else about which the young person is concerned.

Grandparents and other family members involved with the young parents may also be supported.

Young people may make contact directly with the TPSP. Referrals are also made by professionals and anyone interested in the welfare of the young parent and his/her child.

The main aim of the TPSP is to provide early interventions, which are needed and outcome focused, to enhance and support the well-being of all young parents and their children, empower young parents in their parenting role and ensure equality of opportunity for parent and child.

Young parents with higher needs at Levels 3 and 4 on the Hardiker scale* are also supported with specific additional interventions (such as support with parenting skills or independent living) as part of an interagency approach to family support.

In 2019, **31%** of all new referrals to the TPSP had needs located at Hardiker Level 3 compared to **37% in 2018** and **30% in 2017** while **5%** of all new referrals had needs located at Hardiker Level 4 compared to **5% in 2018** and **3%** in 2017.

*Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2012). Working Together for Children. Toolkit for the Development of a Children's Services Committee. 2nd Edition. Government Publications, Dublin.

Summary of Teen Births in Ireland 2010-2019

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

Year	Number of Births	Fertility Rate*
2010	2019	15.0
2011	1720	12.5
2012	1639	12.2
2013	1381	10.4
2014	1253	9.3
2015	1187	8.7
2016	1098	7.8
2017	1041	6.9
2018	980	6.3
2019	864	5.5

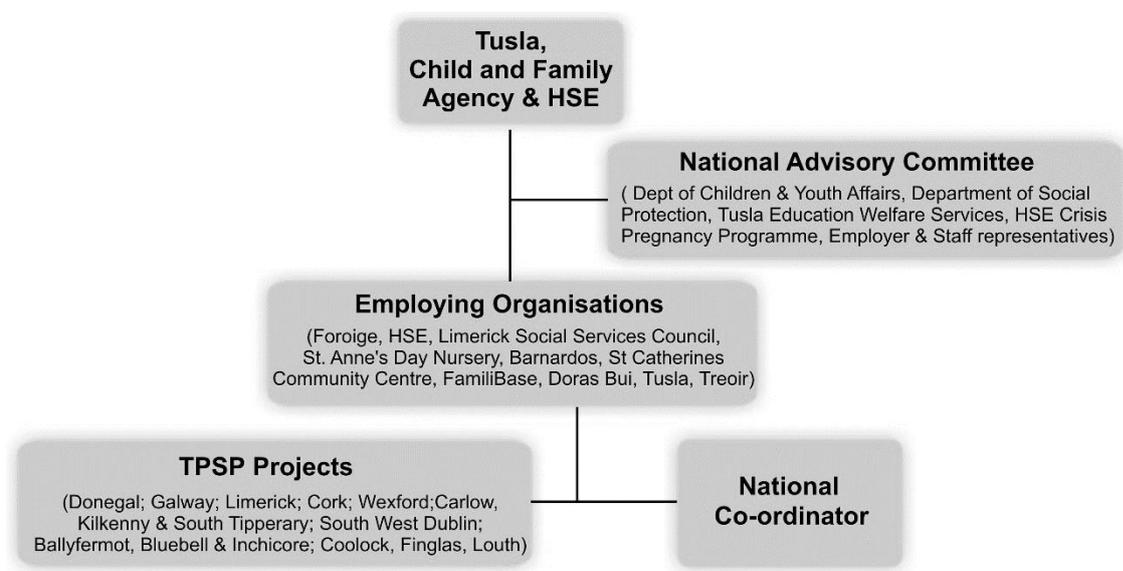
Sources: CSO Vital Statistics and Yearly Summary 2019

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

In 2019, when the births to teen mothers were registered, 138 mothers (16%) were described by the CSO as married or in a civil partnership and an additional 191 mothers (26% of the remainder) were described as living at the same address as the father of their child. In total 38% of teen mothers were described as married, in a civil partnership or living at the same address as the father of their child when the birth was registered.

In 2019, there were 21 births to mothers aged 15 years or under and 17 referrals to the TPSP of mothers in this age group. In 2019, there were 53 births to mothers aged 16 years and 20 referrals to the TPSP of mothers in this age group.

Structure of the Teen Parents Support Programme

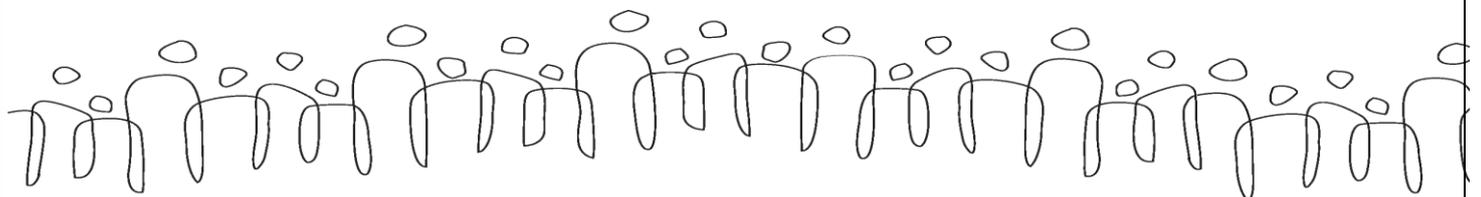


Summary of contact in 2019 with young parents and their families

- + **697** - the number of young parents and other family members who, together with their children were offered support in 2019.
- + **256** - the number who presented for support for the first time:
236 mothers
20 fathers.
- + **13** - the number of mothers who had engaged with the service previously and presented again for support in 2019.
- + **225** - the number who were referred in earlier years and continued to receive support during 2019 and into 2020:
209 mothers
15 fathers
1 grandmother.
- + **255** - the number of young parents for whom support ended in 2019:
230 mothers
25 fathers.

Of the **255** above, **50** mothers and **2** fathers were referred to the TPSP in 2019.

In addition, in 2019, due to the mother/father of their child engaging with the projects, the TPSP had some contact with **289** other young parents: **236** fathers and **53** mothers.





Young Mothers

During 2019, **644** young mothers engaged with the TPSP. Of these:

- 75% were Irish and 6% were Irish Travellers
- 16% were aged 16 or under when referred to the TPSP
- 26% were known to have a social care history*
- 31% were described in 2019 as either Level 3 or Level 4 on the Hardiker scale
- 8% had at least one repeat birth.

**For the purpose of this Summary, 'social care history' refers to current or previous engagement with Tusla Family Support Services, including young people currently or previously in care.*

Of the 644 young mothers supported in 2019, 51% had been referred by maternity services, 8% by schools, 5% by Tusla Social Workers, 5% by PHNs while 7% of the young mothers referred themselves.

➤ Education

In 2019, 39% of the mothers supported were in education or training. An analysis of those whose educational attainment was known, shows that 43% of those not in education were early school leavers i.e. had left school without their Leaving Certificate or equivalent with 22% of them not having a Junior Certificate. The analysis also shows that 35% of the early school leavers are known to have dropped out of school during their pregnancy. In 2019, 26% of the early school leavers had a social care history and 38% of them presented with high welfare or care needs.

➤ Accommodation

In 2019, 73% of all the young mothers supported were living in a family home (either with their family of origin, a sibling, the family of their child's father or in foster care) while 18% were in private rented accommodation. The remaining 9% had a variety of living arrangements including 25 who were living in homeless accommodation, 9 in supported accommodation, 4 in direct provision, 3 in residential care and 2 (whose children was in care) were sleeping rough.

➤ Employment

Of the 644 mothers supported in 2019, 18% were in employment. These were in the older age range supported, had a lower level of need and higher educational attainments than those supported overall. For example, 18% were described as having high welfare/care needs compared to 31% overall, and 18% had a social care history compared to 26% overall. In terms of education, all but one mother at least their Junior Cert with 57% having completed their Leaving Certificate and an additional 18% having a PLC or 3rd Level qualification.

➤ Social Protection

Most mothers (80%) including those in employment, were in receipt of some form of Social Protection Payment. Of these, 51% were on the OFP, 15% were on Job Seekers Allowance, 5% were on Disability Allowance, 5% were dependent adult of a Social Welfare Recipient and 4% were on a Training Allowance. The remainder were on Maternity Benefit, Back to Education Allowance, Direct Provision Allowance, the Working Family Payment and Supplementary Welfare Allowance in that order. Most of those who had no income were young people under 18 years of age and antenatal. However, others were non-Irish nationals who were not able to satisfy the Habitual Residence condition.

➤ **Childcare**

Regarding childcare needs, 51% of mothers who were postnatal did not have childcare. Most of these mothers (84%) were not in education, training, or employment although some of them would have benefitted from childcare as respite for themselves and as routine and stimulation for their children. The remaining 16% had an unmet childcare need or their childcare needs were only partially met. Most of those (59%) who had childcare used a crèche. Where home-based childcare was used this was provided mainly by the maternal grandmother (68%), by another family member (26%) or by a private childminder (6%).

➤ **Mothers with a Social Care History**

Of the 644 young mothers supported, 26% (165) had a social care history. Of these, over one third (33%) were aged 16 years or under when they were referred to the TPSP. These mothers had a lower level of educational attainment compared to all mothers supported. Despite being younger, a similar percentage (60%) were not in any form of education or training compared to all mothers (61%). However, 68% were early school leavers compared to 43% of all mothers supported. They were also more likely to experience a housing crisis with 10% living in homeless accommodation compared to 4% of all mothers supported.

➤ **Children with a Social Care History**

In 2019, the TPSP supported the mothers of 74 children who had current or previous involvement with Tusla Family Services. In 2019, there were 29 children involved with Tusla Social Work Services, 3 children involved with other Tusla Family Support Services as well as 4 other children in care. A further 38 children had been involved with Tusla Social Work Services in the past. The TPSP data shows that 88% of the mothers of these children also had current or previous involvement with Tusla Social Workers. This includes 9 who had been in care in the past and one young mother who was still in care.

➤ **Irish Traveller Mothers**

In 2019 the TPSP supported 37 young mothers who are Irish Travellers. In 84% of cases these young mothers were referred by maternity services compared to 51% of all mothers. They tended to be younger than other mothers with 9 of them (24%) aged 16 years or under when referred compared to 16% of all the young mothers referred. In terms of education, they were very disadvantaged. For example, only 4 of the young Traveller mothers were still in education/training. Of those out of education/training, 4 had completed their Leaving Certification leaving 29 (78%) early school leavers compared 43% of all the young mothers supported. In 2019, 84% of young Traveller mothers were living in a family home (either with their family of origin, another family member or the family of their child's father) compared to 70% of all mothers supported. Only two young Traveller mothers (5%) were in private rented accommodation compared to 18% of all mothers. In addition, 2 were living in a halting site, 1 was in homeless accommodation and 1 was sleeping rough.

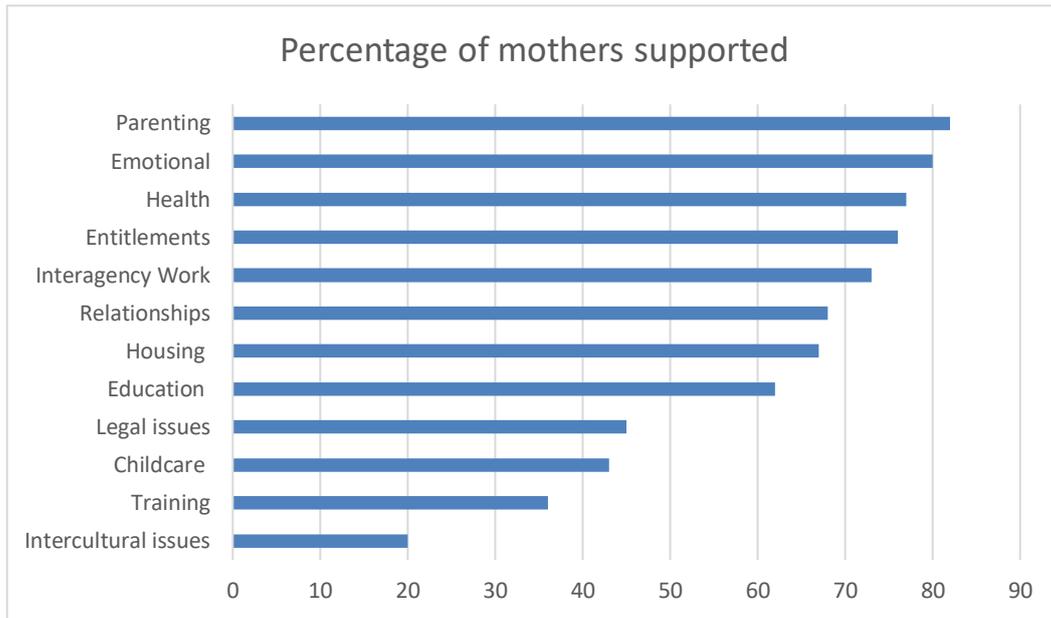
➤ **Non-Irish Mothers**

In 2019 the TPSP also supported 89 non-Irish mothers, 8 of whom were English and 2 of whom were from other parts of Western Europe. The remaining 79 mothers consisted of:

- 20 from various African countries
- 19 who identified as Roma
- 15 who were Polish
- 12 from other countries in Eastern Europe
- 8 from Brazil and
- 5 from different Asian countries.

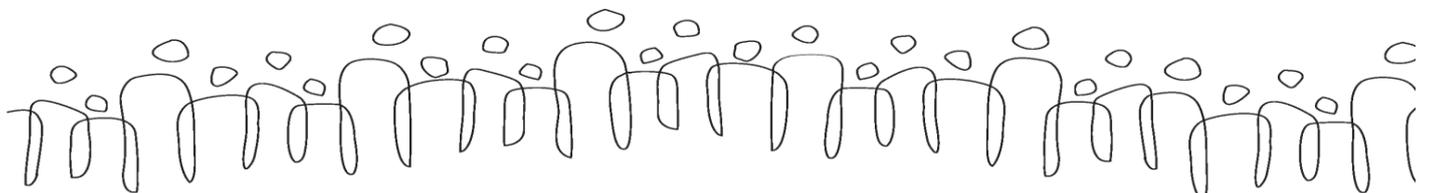
These young mothers received additional support with accessing services, understanding Irish birth and parenting practices, resolving dual cultural issues (where parents are from different ethnic backgrounds) as well as support in relation to entitlements and habitual residence requirements.

Supports to all young mothers in 2019



The Chart above shows, in percentage terms, the areas in which all young mothers received support in 2019. While most support was delivered on a one-to-one basis, where opportunities arose TPSP staff organised Groups and Programmes, including evidence-based parenting programmes, either on an ongoing basis or in response to specific identified needs. In total 165 young mothers attended one of these Groups or Programmes while 46 availed of TPSP-based antenatal classes tailored to meet the needs of young expectant mothers.

The TPSP works in close partnership with all local organisations, agencies and services available to a young parent such as family support services, health services, schools, housing agencies and relevant non-governmental agencies. This partnership takes the form of collaboration and mutual referral systems. In 2019, the TPSP liaised with other agencies on behalf of 73% of all its young mothers. In order of frequency, most contact took place with the following: Local Authorities & Housing Agencies combined; Tusla Family Support Services (including social workers, aftercare workers and Meitheal); Educational Institutions (Second and Third Level institutions, combined); Maternity Services; Department of Social Protection representatives; Training Organisations; Public Health Nurses; Childcare Providers; Counselling Services and Youth Services. There was also contact with Disability Services, services for those who are victims of domestic violence, CICs and non-governmental organizations such as SVP, NASC and others.





Young Fathers

In 2019, **59** fathers engaged with the TPSP separately from the mothers of their children. Of these:

- 80% were Irish, 8% were Irish Travellers and the remainder had 5 different nationalities
- 14% were 16 years or under when referred to the TPSP
- 29% were known to have a social care history and
- 32% had needs at Hardiker Levels 3 or 4.

Care must be taken when interpreting comparisons in this section due to the differences in the number of mothers and fathers involved. Nonetheless, the profile above is similar that of the young mothers supported. Regarding the mothers of their children, however, 40% had a social care history compared to 26% of all mothers who engaged with the TPSP. Most of young fathers self-referred to the TPSP having heard about the Programme through the mother of their child, a peer or a family member. There were also referrals from Tusla, Maternity Services, Youth Services and other agencies.

➤ Education

The 59 young fathers supported in 2019 presented as somewhat less educationally disadvantaged than the young mothers supported with 43% in education or training. Of the remainder, 31% were early school leavers i.e. had left school without their Leaving Certificate or equivalent compared to 43% of mothers. Of these early school leavers, 75% had a social care history. In 2019, 25% of them were described as still having high welfare or social care needs compared to 38% of mothers.

➤ Employment

Of the fathers supported, almost one third (32%) were in employment. Like the mothers who were working, these young fathers were also in the older age range supported, had a lower level of need and higher educational attainments than those supported overall. All of those in employment had at least their Junior Certificate, 52% had completed the Leaving Certificate and one young father had completed a PLC.

➤ Social Protection

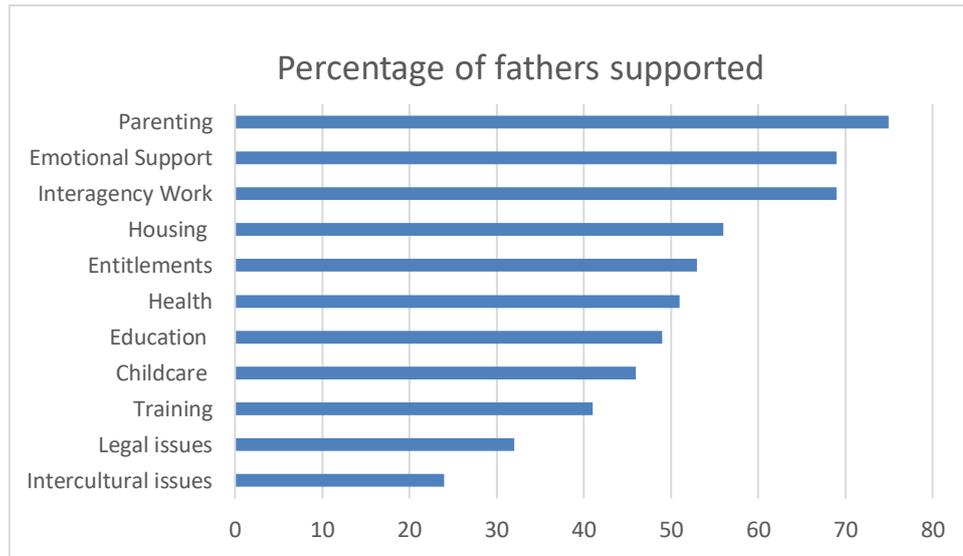
Of those not in education, training or employment, the majority (73%) were in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance. A small number of young fathers were on Disability Allowance, SWA, OFP and the Working Family Payment.

➤ Contact with their children

In 2019, the TPSP supported **397** mothers who were postnatal. In **42** cases the father's level of contact with his child was not known when the data was collected. Of the remaining **355** fathers:

- **136** were described as having frequent contact with their child
- **79** were married/cohabiting with the mother of their child
- **63** had infrequent contact
- **49** had no contact with their children
- **17** had a legal access arrangement
- **8** of the children were living in the paternal home without the mother
- **3** fathers were deceased.

Supports to all young fathers in 2019



The Chart above shows, in percentage terms, the areas in which young fathers received support in 2019. As with mothers, most support was delivered on a one-to-one basis. However, 8 fathers participated in Groups facilitated by TPSP staff.

Regarding interagency work, in 2019 the TPSP liaised with other agencies on behalf of 69% of the young fathers supported. In order of frequency, most contact took place with the following: Tusla Family Support Services (including social workers, aftercare workers and Meitheal); Training Organisations; Local Authorities & Housing Agencies combined; Educational Institutions (Second and Third Level combined); Maternity Services; Counselling Services, Mental Health Services and Department of Social Protection representatives.

Galway Mother and Baby Group

The TPSP runs regular Mother and Baby Groups in a city centre location. This has evolved over the years, as a response to a need expressed by the parents to meet with other young parents their own age. The City Centre location is Croi na Gaillimhe, run by the St. Vincent De Paul. It is very accessible and is close to the hospital where most of the young mothers have their babies.

The young parents are invited to come together with their babies on a Thursday afternoon. Tea/ coffee and healthy snacks are provided for the children. Suitable toys and facilities are available.

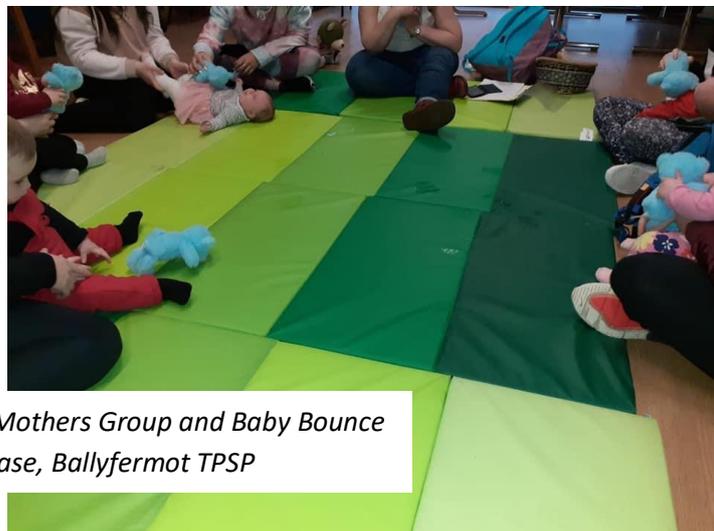
The mothers generally make friends through this group and then arrange to contact each other separately and can share the ups and down of being a young parent.

opportunity as workers in the programme to observe them parenting in a very informal way and offer ideas and suggestions and information as needed.

We also provide information sessions on a range of issue such as parenting i.e. feeding, weaning, healthy eating, first aid, play, child development and education/training courses for themselves. On several occasions throughout the year, we have met the young parents at a play centre which is very suited to young toddlers' needs. It is situated on the east side of the City. We cover admission costs and we provide transport if needed.

In 2019, we also ran two outings for parents and babies in the Summer to Loughwell Pet Farm and another in December to visit Santa, which were a great success. Both parents are encouraged to attend the day outings. This is an opportunity to take their children on a social outing together where they can interact with other parents and the children can socialise too.

Aileen Davies, TPSP Project Leader Galway.



Young Mothers Group and Baby Bounce
Familibase, Ballyfermot TPSP

Outcomes for parents whose contact with the TPSP ended in 2019

During 2019, a total of 255 service users ceased contact with the TPSP. These consisted of 230 young mothers and 25 fathers. Of these, 52 (50 mothers and 2 fathers) were referred in 2019. The following Table gives a short profile of the young mothers and fathers. It shows their ages at time of referral, compares their level of need at time of referral and when support ceased, compares their accommodation type at time of referral and when support ceased and gives the reasons why support ended.

Characteristic	Category	Young Parents (255)
Age at time of referral	15 years or under	12
	16 years	37
	17 years	57
	18 years	53
	19 years	65
Level of Need at time of referral	Hardiker 1	0
	Hardiker 2	155
	Hardiker 3	89
	Hardiker 4	11
Level of Need when support ceased	Hardiker 1	10
	Hardiker 2	180
	Hardiker 3	60
	Hardiker 4	5
Accommodation at time of referral	Living in family home	161
	Living with other family member	12
	Home of child's other parent	18
	Private rented accommodation	31
	In care	6
	Homeless	8
	Refuge	2
	Supported accommodation	2
	Other	2
Accommodation when support ceased	Living in family home	140
	Living with other family member	14
	Home of child's other parent	16
	Private rented accommodation	50
	In care	2
	Homeless	9
	Own Home-Local Authority and other	5
	Supported accommodation	2
	Other	3
	Not known when data was collected	14
Reasons support ceased	Needs were met	81
	Child >2 and needs were partially met	34
	Referred to other support	6
	Children in care	5
	Moved out of area	24
	Did not avail of service	53
	Parent ceased contact	47
	Other	4



Education and Training

The TPSP places emphasis on supporting young parents to complete their education, if that is their choice. Alongside support with parenting, this enables them to focus on their own development as young people and contributes to future equality of opportunity for both the parent and child. During the 2018/19 academic year, 8 of the 11 TPSPs received funding from the School Completion Programme (SCP) through Tusla's Education Welfare Services¹. The aim of the SCP is to increase the numbers of young people staying in primary and second level school and in doing so increase the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle or the equivalent.

In 2019, the TPSP used SCP funding to provide contributions towards childcare, grinds, books, transport and uniforms. TPSP staff also organised revision groups, peer support groups, personal development courses, pre-vocational taster programmes and guidance counselling. In addition, all the young parents known to have a childcare need received information and support in relation to accessing childcare to enable them complete their education.

Educational outcomes for young parents who engaged with the TPSP

In 2019, TPSP support ceased for 230 young mothers and 25 young fathers. The following table compares their highest educational attainment when they were first referred to the TPSP and when contact ceased in 2019. As stated above, 52 of these young parents (50 mothers and 2 fathers) were also referred to the TPSP in 2019.

Highest Educational Attainment	When referred to the TPSP (255)	When support ceased in 2019 (255)
Completed Third Level	0	1
Completed PLC Course	5	18
Completed Leaving Cert	57	67
Completed Junior Cert only	101	89
No 2nd Level qualification	23	10
Non-Irish qualification only	9	6
Completed other training	5	7
Not known*		57

*refers mostly to those who were on a waiting list or had moved out of the area when the data was collected as well as those who did not avail of the service.

¹ <https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/scp/>

Hannah's Journey



"From getting pregnant at the age of 19 I honestly thought that any of my dreams and potential would not be able to happen. To be honest when I found out I was pregnant I was scared, frightened and embarrassed. The further along my pregnancy the more anxious I got. I wore baggy clothes to try and hide I was pregnant. My family were really supportive and told me things were going to get better, honestly, I didn't believe them I just thought they were just saying that. My other half had a lot of pressure from different places and during my pregnancy I found it incredibly difficult to maintain a happy relationship. In 2015 my beautiful baby boy was born. I absolutely adored him and couldn't believe he was mine. However, my anxiety at the time was at an all-time high and I felt judged being a young mum. Sometimes people would be making judgemental comments and I felt really anxious taking the baby out on my own. I felt like I was never going to have the opportunity to go to college like all my friends. I hated going anywhere and felt ashamed meeting new people and them knowing my situation.

When my son was 8 months old, I went to the PHN and I completely broke down. She told me about the Teen Parents Support Programme and to be honest I wasn't keen on meeting a new person and explaining my situation. But Jaqueline made me feel completely at ease and it was great getting to chat to someone other than family. I felt I could also relate to her more because she was a young mum herself so I felt she was actually speaking the truth. We worked on things about anxiety. I struggled to pass my driving test and it took me my 6th attempt to pass it. Before my 6th attempt Jacqueline did a lot of work to help me with my nerves and confidence in helping me believe in myself, that I could do it, and on the morning of my driving test Jaqueline went through some breathing exercises. We met up for a cup of tea before and it really helped and I passed. What I loved about the Teen Parents Support Programme is that it felt just like chatting to a listening ear and you weren't being judged. That no matter how big or small a problem, that someone was listening.

Regards to education I thought that I wouldn't be able to do it. I had just finished my Leaving Cert the previous year and most courses I was half interested in before, they were away from home so they weren't going to be an option anymore. I worked in cafes but I knew that it wasn't for me but I didn't know what I wanted to do. Jaqueline however set me up with a careers person and I was able to discuss my interests etc and could find out more about what kind of jobs them courses could lead me to and how long it would take etc. I found this really beneficial.

Jacqueline contacted me not long after and had said that there was a special needs course introduction starting the following evening. It wasn't something I had ever considered but thought I had nothing to lose. I absolutely loved the introduction and it gave me such a great insight into it and I knew that it was definitely something I would love to do. I continued then and did my diploma in North West Regional College and did a teaching learning support course. Luckily, I now had my driving licence and it was great because I got to access ESB funding through the Teen Parents Support Programme. Through this I got an allowance every week that I was able to put towards diesel etc. I also got help from the School Completion Programme towards paying my course which took so much pressure off me as I was going to be struggling to pay for it. Jacqueline arranged for me to get help with getting my CV done up and when I went to do this she also came with me and helped me with the baby so I could concentrate on it and I didn't have the extra pressure or anxiety of looking after a baby on top of it.

I have done a number of courses since then and they gave me the confidence to complete my level 7 in which I graduated in 2019. I would not be the person I am now if it wasn't for the Teen Parents Support Programme. So much has happened over the past 4 years. I made goals during my time at the Teen Parents Support Programme and made a 5 year plan and I have completed all my goals and can't believe it. I never thought that could happen. Fast forward 5 years since having my child and I have a permanent job in a school, am living with my partner and recently engaged. If it wasn't for the Teen Parents Support Programme, I think I might have just settled in any job and just never believed in myself. The best thing I've done since becoming a parent is signing up to this. It has helped me with so many things and I hope one day I can pay the kindness forward that they gave me".

Young Parents and Housing

The current ongoing housing crisis is having a serious effect on the young parents and children supported by the TPSP. TPSP staff report developmental delays in children living in homeless accommodation or substandard/overcrowded housing. The housing crisis among young parents is evidenced by the fact that, in 2019, TPSP staff liaised more often with Local Authorities and Homeless Agencies than with any other service provider.

Every June since 2016, the TPSP has conducted a Census of all its service users with a serious housing need. This is to ensure that the needs of young people who are also young parents are included in discussions about youth homelessness. The Census used the ETHOS² typology used by FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. FEANTSA uses 4 categories to describe housing needs: Roofless, Homeless, Insecure, and Inadequate. In June 2019, the TPSP Housing Needs Census found that 128 (18%) of the young parents accessing its supports had a serious housing need. This compares with 140 (16% of those supported) in 2018. The June 2019 figures are comprised of:

Roofless: 2 young mothers were sleeping rough.

Homeless: 21 young parents (20 mothers and 1 father) were in homeless accommodation or temporary supported accommodation following homelessness.

Insecure Accommodation: 43 mothers were in insecure accommodation. This consists of those couch surfing with family or friends and those living with insecure tenancies or under the threat of eviction.

Inadequate Accommodation: 62 young parents (60 mothers and 2 fathers) were living in inadequate accommodation such as rented properties that are substandard or homes with serious overcrowding.



Supporting a homeless family

Mary, her partner John and their two children Michael (3 years) and John Jr (2years) spent four months in B & B accommodation during 2019. John had an underlying physical health condition. Mary had diagnosed mental health difficulties. Michael presented with behavioural difficulties. Both parents were unable to manage money and had never learned how to budget. Neither parent was engaged in training or education.

The TPSP Project Worker initiated a Meitheal Support Plan for the family. The services involved included Barnardos, the family's PHN, the Focus Housing Support Worker and the children's crèche. The TPSP Project Worker supported Mary and John with budgeting, implementing structure and routines and behaviour management. Neither of the parents engaged in any social activities or had friends locally and both parents were isolated from family members. This meant that they had no informal support or anyone to turn to outside of the formal support of agencies.

The Focus Ireland Housing Worker made enormous efforts to secure accommodation for the family but the lack of affordable and suitable accommodation made this difficult. Some teen parents leave Dublin because accommodation is seen to be cheaper in neighbouring counties but the standard of accommodation in urban areas outside Dublin varies greatly. The PHN carried out health checks on the children. Michael and John Jr attended a local crèche while they were homeless. This meant that they had structure and routine to their day, somewhere warm to rest, safe to play and enjoy regular nutritious meals. Without this service while living in B&B, Mary and John would have found it very difficult to manage the requirement of staying out all day with two small children.

During this time Mary made a suicide attempt. She said that this was specifically due to the struggle of spending such a long time living in a B & B. Tusla Social Work Services were notified of this development and Mary received support.

Mary, John and the children are now housed although their accommodation is not of an adequate standard and not suitable for a young family. They still require a lot of support including support from the Focus Ireland Worker to negotiate with the landlord regarding basic repairs, safety in the house and general maintenance issues. The children still enjoy attending their crèche. Currently, neither parent feels ready to avail of education or training which could help them build a better future for themselves and their family.

² <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>
(accessed 8th September 2020)

National Coordination of the TPSP

The national coordinator of the TPSP is based in Treoir. The main purpose of this post is to provide a central focal point for the promotion of the work of the TPSP and the enhancement of the lives of all young parents including those living outside areas covered by a TPSP.

In 2019 this was achieved mainly through:

- maintaining regular contact with TPSP projects and holding regular meetings of all project staff, project management and the TPSP National Advisory Committee
- keeping TPSP staff informed of changes in government policy and legislation in areas which affect young parents such as education and training, childcare, social welfare, and housing
- maintaining contact with key staff in relevant government departments and State agencies and advocating on behalf of the TPSP and young parents nationally
- collecting, collating and analysing detailed data from the TPSP database in relation to referrals received and supports offered by the TPSP. This is used for this annual TPSP Summary of Work; for reports to Tusla; to explore outcomes and to inform TPSP policies and advocacy
- collecting, collating and analysing the TPSP Housing Census described elsewhere in this Summary
- collaborating with other agencies and initiatives who have interests in common with young parents in areas such as parenting, housing, childcare, sexual health and maternity services
- providing training to TPSP staff and other professionals working with young parents mentioned elsewhere in the Summary
- responding to queries from young parents and those involved with them
- continuing discussions with Tusla and TPSP staff regarding the administration of the School Completion Programme (SCP)
- supporting TPSP projects with the recruitment and induction of new staff
- maintaining the TPSP website.

➤ TPSP Meetings

To ensure cohesion and the flow of communication among all strands of the TPSP structure, in 2019 the National Coordinator organised two separate meetings each for the TPSP Employing Organisations, the TPSP National Advisory Committee and for all TPSP project staff. The Coordinator followed up issues raised at these meetings such as childcare, housing, The School Completion Programme and aspects of the Supplementary Welfare System.

In line with the Youth Participation Strategy, in 2019 two young mothers joined the TPSP National Advisory Committee. One of these young parents is a former TPSP service user currently in third level education and the other young mother is a current service user in secondary school.

➤ Policy and Advocacy

One of the other main ways in which the TPSP supports all young parents in Ireland is through advocating on their behalf. During 2019, the National Coordinator made a Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP). The TPSP also made inputs to the HSE's Working Group for the The Maternity Hospital Patient Experience Survey 2019/2020.

During 2019 the National Coordinator represented the needs of young parents on groups such as:

- The Irish Coalition to end Youth Homelessness
- A Working Group in relation to NCCA's Review of RSE in schools
- The Parenting Network
- The HSE's Maternity Service Users Advisory Group.

Attendance at meetings of the HSE's Maternity Service Users Advisory Group was shared between the National Coordinator and Trish Hurley, TPSP Project Worker, Cork.

The TPSP National Coordinator also advocated for young parents at events such as:

- The Tusla Parenting Conference
- The HEA Access Forum
- Focus Ireland's Annual Conference entitled 'Ending Youth Homelessness'.
- A Customer Representative Forum organised by DEASP
- A Consultation on the new Youth Justice Strategy jointly organised by the Children's Rights Alliance and the National Youth Council of Ireland
- The launch of its Report Card 2019 by the Children's Rights Alliance and
- The biennial conference of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre entitled 'Family Support Now and in the Future'.

In terms of outcomes, in 2019 DEASP changed the eligibility conditions attached to the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) for young parents who are in receipt of the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) and aged between 18 and 21 years of age. Previously these young parents had to be out of education for 2 years to qualify for BTEA compared to 3 or 9 months for older OFP recipients. For young parents, a break from education for two years could be demotivating and have the effect of their not returning to education at all. The eligibility conditions for these young parents have now been brought into line with young people in receipt of Disability Allowance. This means that young parents under 21 years of age and returning to Second Level Education are eligible for BTEA if they have been out of education for 3 months and those returning to Third Level Education are eligible for BTEA if they have been out of education for 9 months. This change is the direct result of this issue being highlighted in several Pre-budget Submissions made by the TPSP and ongoing follow up with government officials in DEASP.

In relation to the HSE's Maternity Hospital Patient Experience Survey 2019/2020, the TPSP advocated for the inclusion of mothers under 16 years of age in this Survey. Ethical approval to include mothers under 16 years of age was not received in time for the 2019 Survey. However, the HSE intends to include mothers under 16 years of age in future Surveys.

➤ Reporting to Tusla

In 2019 the National Coordinator provided the Corporate Planning and Corporate Performance Section (CPCP) of Tusla with quarterly updates on the numbers of young parents supported by the TPSP projects.

➤ Responding to queries

The Coordinator also acts as a source of information, advice and guidance for professionals working with young parents in areas where there is not a TPSP and directs them to other appropriate services. She also responds to queries from pregnant and parenting teens, parents/guardians and professionals from areas where there is not a TPSP. During 2019 she also delivered an Information Session on teen pregnancy to two separate Leaving Certificate Applied classes.

➤ TPSP Website

During 2019, the TPSP website (www.tpsp.ie) was updated regularly with items of interest to young parents and those involved with them. In 2019, the Home Page of the website was viewed 27,400 times. A total of 19,793 other pages were viewed. The pages on Where to Find a TPSP, Support and Fathers were the most frequently viewed, in that order.



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TPSP Workshops

During 2019, the TPSP organized two workshops targeting professionals working with young parents nationally.

FOCUS ON FATHERS

The Focus on Fathers Workshop is based on the *Young Fathers Resource Pack* which was developed originally by the Louth TPSP and funded at that time by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. This workshop was co-facilitated by Veronica Black, Treoir's Information and Training Officer and Finian Murray, Men's Health Development Worker, HSE Dublin North East. To date, 74 non-TPSP workers have completed this Workshop.

THE TPSP TOOLKIT

In 2019, the TPSP also organised a Workshop based on *The TPSP Toolkit*. This Toolkit, which was also funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency brings together in one resource manual the knowledge, skills and experience of TPSP staff. The Toolkit focuses on what are the unique needs of young parents. This was the 13th Toolkit Workshop organised by the TPSP bringing to 191 the number of professionals working in non-TPSP areas who have availed of it. These include youth workers, social workers, family support workers, aftercare workers, staff in family resource centres, staff in housing agencies, those working with marginalised groups such as young Traveller mothers and those working in drug addiction services.

Both these Workshops have proved to be a very efficient way of disseminating learning and good practice from the TPSP to staff in areas where there are no specific support services for teen parents. They are also a way in which young parents living in these areas can benefit to some extent from the resources and expertise of the TPSP.



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