

CHAPTER NINE

Working with young parents

Introduction

This section focuses on young parents. It presents demographics relating to young parents, explains the varying needs and issues that young parents may face and it offers practical advice. It concludes with a list of contacts that will help you in your work with young parents.

Your role as a youth worker may be to support a young person who is about to become a young parent. While they may access specialised services it is important that they are also fully included and supported in other community-based youth groups and they feel welcome to continue their involvement in your youth group.



In the Republic of Ireland under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their family status (a parent of a child under 18 years of age) or their marital status in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation.

In Northern Ireland under **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998** public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Teen parent is a young parent - male or female - aged between 13-19 years.

Young parent is a young parent - male or female - aged 13-25 years.

Solo-parent/lone parent refers to a person parenting alone

One Parent family is a family headed by one parent whereby the second parent does not live in the family home.

Family form is the way a family make-up can be described; for example a one-parent family, a blended family, a nuclear family etc.

Throughout this section ‘young parents’ also includes young women who are pregnant and their partners



Demographics

Young Mothers

In **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** 14% of all registered births were to mothers under the age of 25 (2008). In **Northern Ireland (NI)** 5% of registered births were to mothers under 20 years old (2010). Almost 80% of these births in Republic of Ireland and 97.5% in Northern Ireland were outside marriage; either to solo-parents or co-habiting couples. This compares to 33% of births outside marriage for all age groups.ⁱ

The number of teenage mothers has always been relatively small but it has been dropping further - from 4.4% in 1997 to 2.2% by 2007 in Republic of Ireland and from 6.8% to 5.7% in the North for the same period.ⁱⁱ

Those at risk of becoming young parents

There is a tendency for teenage pregnancy rates to be higher in areas of socio-economic deprivation. The numbers of solo-parents living in areas and communities where there are high levels of poverty is significant.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, the decline in teenage births in the Republic of Ireland between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s was not apparent in the Rotunda Hospital^{iv} which serves an inner-city population with a disproportionately high number of socially-disadvantaged women.

Furthermore, the proportion of lone-parent families exceeds 30% in some local authority housing estates in Dublin's disadvantaged inner-city and suburban localities compared to an Irish average of 13%.^{v,vi} The Republic of Ireland is not unique in revealing a distinctive social and spatial patterning of lone parenthood and teenage pregnancy.^{vii} Higher teenage pregnancy rates in Northern Ireland most often occur in areas of economic and social deprivation.

Needs and issues for young parents

Young parents can face isolation, negative social attitudes, stress, anxiety and low self-esteem. They can also miss out on education and employment opportunities. Many live on a small budget that does not allow for extras.

It is important to be aware that, in working with a young parent, both parent and child come as a 'package'. You will need to consider, and be clear about, the ways you and your organisation can support a young parent with their child.



Youth services have a lot to offer young parents especially in the areas of building confidence, offering non-formal education opportunities, personal development and being a place of welcome where they and their child/ren are valued and supported.

Youth services can also be a valuable space for giving the young parent personal time away from the responsibility of parenthood.

The Department of Health (ROI) recommends that youth services should develop guidelines on how best to respond to the needs of teenagers who become pregnant, especially those with little evident support.^{viii} If youth workers can support young parents to look at their own needs and help them to meet those needs it leaves the young parent in a much better position to meet the needs of their children.

Many young parents feel that they have to dedicate their life to their child. However, often by doing this, they are denying their own personal ambitions. They need to know that they have a right to personal achievement which will also lead to greater enjoyment in parenting.

Isolation and lack of support

Being a young parent can be difficult due to the lack of awareness of how to access support services. This can be particularly pertinent for one-parent families where a young parent does not have access to family or other informal support networks. Isolation and access to support can also be difficult for a young parent who works during the hours when services may be provided. Many solo-parents receive little support or help with caring for their children and the stresses of solo-parenting can take a toll on their health and well-being.

Isolation is a common problem experienced by young parents as it can be difficult to maintain former relationships with friends due to a lack of opportunities to socialise with them. They can feel they have become 'out of touch' with their friends' concerns or interests. Isolation can have devastating effects on both the child and the parent and confidence levels can drop very quickly. Youth workers need to be aware of what options young parents have in accessing services which will help them when they feel isolated. They can play a vital role in supporting young parents to continue to engage with youth groups/programmes. For example, young parents can be encouraged to access general programmes such as drama, young women's groups, community-based youth activities or more specialised programmes like Teen Parent Support Programmes.^{ix}

Added to the emotional challenges often associated with solo-parenting and the lack of public acceptance of one-parent families, life on a low income can make stress levels particularly high.

Life on low income

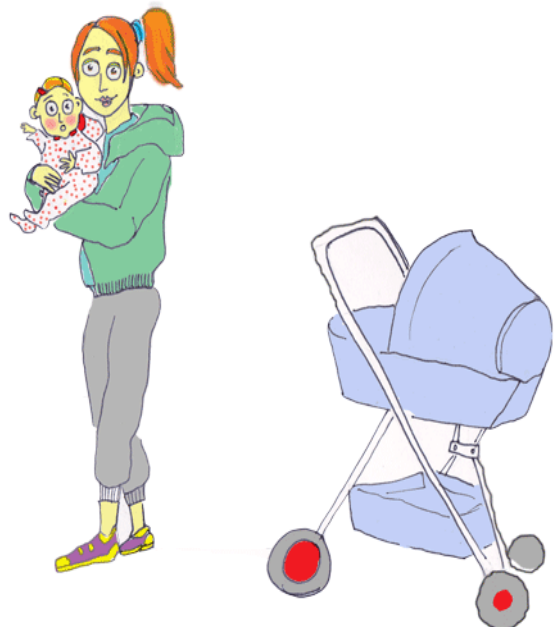
There are many misconceptions that one-parent families get a lot of state supports, particularly monetary support, which can often lead to one-parent families facing undue criticism.

In fact, lone-parent households remain the single most deprived household group in Ireland (North and South) with poverty rates among one-parent families being much higher than for other groups. In 2007, 37.6% of lone-parent families were identified as being 'at risk of poverty'.^x In 2010 almost half of all people in lone parent families were on low income in Northern Ireland.^{xi} Many sole parents work even though it can be more difficult for them to access necessary support such as childcare.

Young parents have difficulties accessing quality and affordable housing with many waiting disproportionate lengths of time for local authority accommodation, often living in overcrowded situations or in the high-cost private-rental sector in the meantime. Solo-parent families spend longer on the waiting list than other household types. 67% of solo-parents had been on the list for more than a year, compared to 62% of couples, and 52% of single person households.^{xii}

Attitudes to young parents in society

For many young people becoming a parent can have a very positive influence on their lives. Many find it a motivating factor in returning to or furthering their education or taking up employment. For many, having to assume responsibility for a child leads to them becoming more responsible for their own lives and their relationship with their child/ren can provide love and security that may have been previously lacking from their lives.



However, many young parents can feel they are being judged negatively by their family and community for becoming parents at such a young age. Although the “moral/religious” stigma attached to

unmarried parents has considerably decreased over the last few decades, many young parents, especially solo-parents feel that people judge them as being irresponsible and a drain on national resources through social welfare dependency.

Young parents often feel that other parents and society at large view them as inadequate parents. However, when young parents see themselves as capable of being good parents their children can grow up to be very happy, confident and successful members of society. If a young parent is not supported to form a positive image of their family then children are vulnerable to several forms of disadvantage. Children need to know from a very young age that their family is perfect just as it is. If they cannot be confident in their family form they can become open to bullying which can lead them to believe that they must have done something wrong not to have a perfect family. Every family is a unique family, one to be cherished and nurtured.

Self-image

Young parents, especially young mothers can find it difficult to maintain a positive self-image after the birth of their child and can suffer from low self-esteem, often due to loss of self-identity. This is especially true if the parent is not in education or employment. Low self-esteem can lead to young people feeling overwhelmed by their role as parents and is also linked to unhealthy sexual relationships, drug and alcohol misuse and depression.



It is important that young parents are encouraged to recognise their value as parents and as individuals and to look positively at the skills they already possess and their achievements so far. Social networks, friendships and involvement in youth groups can help a young parent foster a sense of purpose and achievement.

Health

Depression is commonly associated with pregnancy in young mothers, possibly because of the emotional strain of coping with personal development alongside the responsibilities of parenting. Young parents who are isolated are more at risk of becoming depressed. This can prove adverse for both mother and child. Studies have found that 40% of teenage mothers developed clinical depression in the first year post-delivery.^{xiii}

Negative public attitudes and stereotyping, lack of social networks, poor housing conditions, economic deprivation, lack of access to employment and childcare and inadequate diet or self-care can contribute to physical and mental ill-health amongst young parents.



For more information on supporting a young person with mental health issues see chapter 7 in this Toolkit on ‘Working with young people with mental health issues’

Education

Young parents represent a particularly vulnerable group within the education system. The full-time nature of education and training courses can be prohibitive to young parents, especially those parenting alone. Other factors that influence a young parent’s decision to remain in or return to education include:

- levels of family support
- cultural norms or community values regarding mothering
- stigma

- a negative experience of school
- transport
- social welfare restrictions
- childcare issues

The response of a school to a young mother's pregnancy can greatly influence their decision to remain in education. However, opportunities that do exist for the young parent to return to education offer a gateway to greater autonomy and the potential for greater financial independence.

Services should also respect the right of mothers to be full-time mothers. Many young women feel that being there for their children as they grow takes precedent over current educational or employment needs.

[See Chapter 10A and 10B of the Toolkit for more information on working with early school leavers and those not in training or employment. Also see the Useful contacts section at the end of this chapter.](#)

Recreation

At a time when most of their peers are out and about enjoying their life, young parents are coping with the daily demands of being a parent. While being a parent is rewarding in many ways it can also be tiring, monotonous and stressful. Anyone who spends a lot of time with young children will realise the value of "me time" and for those parenting alone this is especially important.

Young Fathers

It is estimated that around a fifth of teenage fathers have never lived with their child.^{xiv} International research shows that teenage girls' attitudes towards pregnancy are strongly linked to their perception of the father's attitude.

Therefore we can support teenage mothers by supporting teenage fathers. Research shows that grandmothers - maternal grandmothers in particular - are key gatekeepers whereby their attitude to the father is crucial in influencing the future contact between the father and the child.

Young dads who are positively involved can be a hugely important resource for their children and also for the mothers of their children. Research shows that young mothers who feel supported by their baby's father adjust better to motherhood and behave more positively towards their children – for whom a good relationship with “my dad” proves to be a protective factor for the future.



Young fathers need support around the following issues:

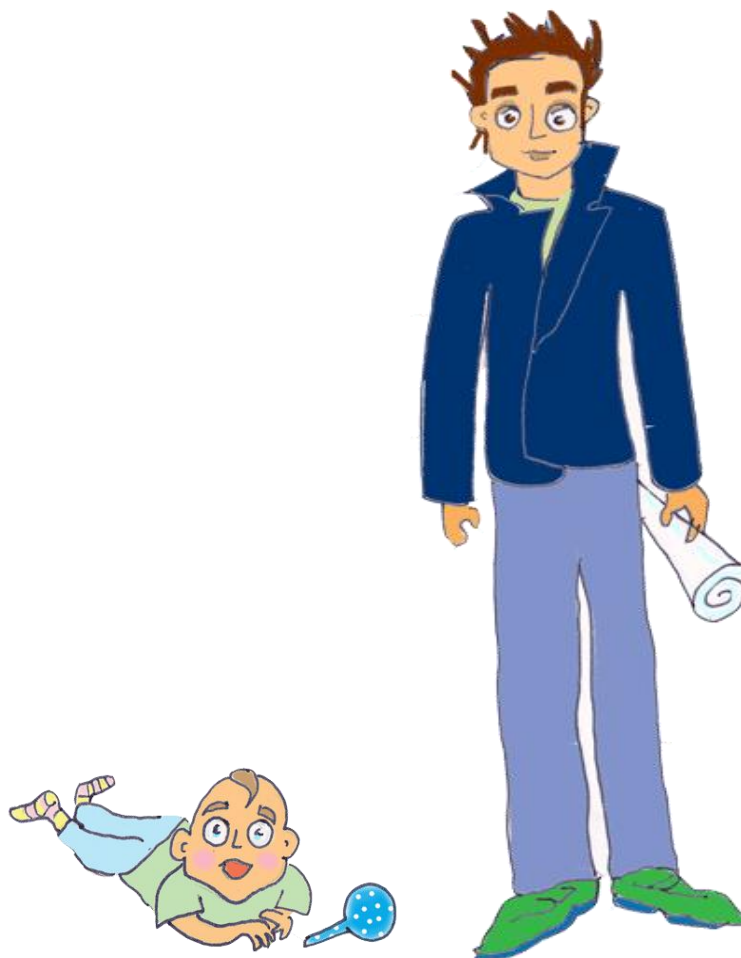
- **Values and attitudes in relation to relationships and parenting**
- **Taking responsibility (including sexual behaviour)**
- **Communication skills**
- **Decision-making**
- **Coping with discrimination**
- **Building a child's self-esteem**
- **Helping children learn**
- **Dealing with conflict and accessing available supports**

Supporting young fathers ultimately supports children to have a better life. Fathers need to be valued and told that they are valuable in their child's life. Fathers who are no longer romantically involved with the mother also need

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support in looking at how they can be part of their child's life without being in a sexual relationship with the child's mother.

Young fathers need a lot of support in seeing parenting as a challenge they can do well in (rather than just engage in). They will need someone to talk to about how they feel. Often the young mum will block them out as they are so scared about what the future holds. They don't have room to support a young dad with similar anxieties. Young fathers need to be patient with the young mum. They need to know that they have much to offer their child but also to be sure that they want to stay involved. Being involved can be very difficult and take a lot of determination so it is important to give young dads long-term support (There is more information on how to support young fathers later in this chapter).

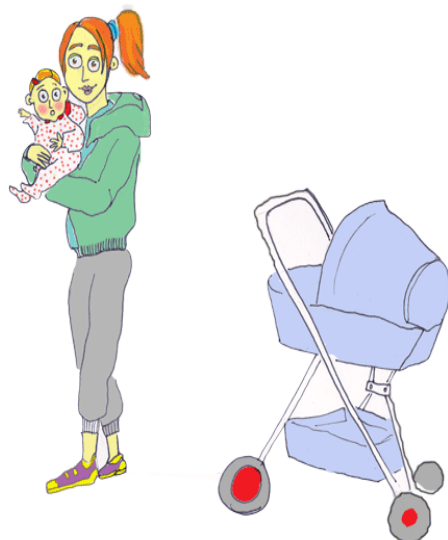


Developing inclusive practice for young parents

Young parents (**including those who are pregnant or their partners**) are often anxious about engaging with youth services or agencies due to lack of confidence or fear of being seen as unable to cope. The development of a trusting relationship is paramount in responding to their needs. Young parents need to know that you are behind them. They should not be patronised, preached to or offered heavy-handed advice on how best to parent their child. Your work needs to focus on promoting their strengths and developing their skills. Whether your group or service is staffed or volunteer-led there are ways in which you can proactively be inclusive of young parents. Consider the following guidelines and how you can best apply them to your situation.

Supporting young parents in a youth work setting

The first thing a youth service must understand when working with young parents is the concept of parent and child coming as ‘a package’. Youth services and programmes should take into account the particular needs and challenges of being a young parent and programmes should be planned with these in mind. Every young parent accessing your youth service is an individual and as such your youth service should try to be flexible enough to respond to their needs in a specific and practical manner. In addition, the experience of engaging with a young parent can lead to an increased number of conversations in your youth service about sexual health. This is an ideal opportunity to introduce a positive sexual health programme.^{xv}



Adapting your service to include young parents

Think about how your service is structured and promoted. Is it parent friendly as well as youth friendly?

- **List your youth service in local publications as offering youth services to young parents**
- **Advertise your group/youth service in places where young parents are likely to attend e.g. schools, colleges, health centres, community/social welfare offices and parenting websites**
- **Ensure the community is clear about what the youth service can offer. Build up positive relationships within the community (through schools, clubs, church, health services, etc.)**
- **Ensure a safe, nurturing and structured environment**
- **Consider your ability to be flexible about times, locations and programme content so that you can meet the needs of young parents**
- **Consider child-minding costs and availability and what support you can offer**
- **Create a child friendly welcoming place for young parents and their children e.g. have toys available for different age groups and a relaxed space in which to meet**
- **Ensure your service is accessible for buggies/prams and have baby changing and feeding facilities available**
- **Consider transport costs and accessible transport services to young parents and plan activities around this to ensure inclusion**
- **Ensure staff are sensitive to the needs of young parents including cultural and religious needs e.g. young Muslim woman requiring single sex provision**

Participation

Young parents need an opportunity to be involved with a youth service that listens and responds to their needs and involves them as active participants in their own development.

- **Treat young parents as adults, not as kids, allowing them to have ideas about life which may not be fully thought out**
- **Young mums vs. older mums - generally young mums have very different issues to older mums so it is best to work with them in separate groups**
- **Group-based programs can often produce more change than individual-based programs especially for high risk mothers but it must be recognised that many young parents will feel apprehensive about joining a group. Time should be given for individual sessions if necessary**
- **Look at the possibility of running gender specific activities and sessions to facilitate safe spaces for discussion**

On-going Support

Health Care

Youth services can help the post-natal parents by linking them with the relevant support, for example programmes for young mothers.



Post-natal depression

Depression is commonly associated with pregnancy in young mothers, possibly because of the emotional strain of coping with personal development alongside the responsibilities of parenting. Young parents who are isolated are

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more at risk of becoming depressed. This can prove adverse for both mother and child. Studies have found that 40% of teenage mothers developed clinical depression in the first year post-delivery. It may be necessary to refer a young parent to a specialised service for support. However, it is important that youth workers continue to support the young person through this process and the young mother has plenty of opportunities to keep in contact with their peers.

Parenting skills

The following are ways that you can support young parents.

- **Help young parents make decisions for themselves - don't tell them what to do**
- **Support young parents to manage stress**
- **Support a young person being a young person and also a mum/dad**
- **Young parents need support around caring for themselves so they can care properly for their child**
- **Help young parents to plan free time, social time and quality time with their child**
- **Offer information sessions on entitlements and back to education or employment opportunities**
- **Help young parents to look at what they want from life and how they can still get that if they decide to be a parent**
- **Explore parenting skills and how they will manage stressful situations, tiredness and responsibility**
- **Try to get the mum and dad talking if they are not already. They can plan together for their child even if they are not in a couple relationship. Help them explore what is best for their child**

- Home visits are recommended where possible, especially for young mothers who live in rural areas and find it difficult to access transport to your youth service
- Organise some fun family-friendly events where young parents can meet other young parents. Informal support is very important. At times also include family members which include grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings. Remember many children have step-siblings and young parents may need support in managing this situation
- Follow up with the young parents as often one small thing can stop them returning to your service. Phone them and check in on how they are doing and make sure they feel welcome to come back at any time
- Create good links to other youth services and services which young parents need to access. Often young parents need a supportive person to go with them the first time to visit a new service
- Help the young parent identify, set and work toward obtaining goals

Involving families

Family support can have a hugely positive influence on the lives of young parents by offering practical and emotional support. Support young parents in communicating with their parents and other adults in their lives. They may not have fully got past being a teenager in the home and now they have to suddenly be an adult and communicate in an adult way.



Support for Fathers

- **Adopt policies and outreach strategies to facilitate relationships between fathers and their children**
- **Assume that all men want to be involved with their children; do not equate the father's absence with not caring**
- **Create a "father friendly environment" by employing more men on staff, displaying photos of men with children, listing fathers on program enrolment forms and adjusting program schedules to fit work schedules**

Early pregnancy support for young mothers

Not all pregnancies are crisis pregnancies but you may find yourself having to advise and support a young person experiencing a crisis pregnancy. If a young woman tells you that she may be pregnant it is important to consider the following:

- **Allow them time to talk and try to pick up on hints they may be giving. It can be very difficult to say 'I think I may be pregnant'. The initial disclosure may come as a partial disclosure or can begin as a series of indirect questions about pregnancy**
- **They will be experiencing a wide range of emotions in response to the pregnancy which can often be conflicting and traumatic. This can include fear, uncertainty with regard to what is involved, guilt, blame, embarrassment, confusion and anxiety about what lies ahead of them**
- **Help them to slow down and to look at what is happening to them. Talk to them about who in their family can be involved. Explain that they will need lots of support no matter what choices they make in the future**

- Be clear with them around how they know they are pregnant. Discuss a GP visit to confirm the pregnancy
- If a young woman has chosen you to be the person they talk to about their pregnancy remember that this will have been a big decision for them. They already trust you so you must ensure that you are very honest with them around what support you can give them
- Ensure that the pregnancy is not a result of sexual abuse. If you suspect there may be sexual abuse then follow your child protection policy on how to proceed. Be aware of Our Duty to Care (NI) www.volunteering-ni.org or the HSE Children First Guidelines (ROI) found on www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html
- Allow a young parent time to tell you what has happened and who is involved and ask them how they would like you to help
- Talk to the young parent about what support services are on offer to them such as in school, hospital and other social care programmes
- Support a young parent in how they will talk to their parents or a family member about the pregnancy
- Ensure the young woman knows she can attend counselling services whereby all her options will be explained in full. Pregnancy counselling in the Republic of Ireland is available from Positive Options www.positiveoptions.ie or Freetext LIST to 50444. This service is free of charge and gives opportunities to young women experiencing a crisis pregnancy to explore their feelings and to discuss options that are open to them in confidence and privacy. (A list of organisations is also contained in the Useful contacts section at the end of this chapter)

Preparing for young parenthood

Youth workers need to help young parents (**including those who are pregnant or their partners**) to start preparing for the life changing events that are only months away.

Pre-natal care

Many young people don't feel comfortable attending antenatal classes which often comprise of older and married mothers. Young mothers often present to antenatal clinics late in their pregnancy.^{xvi} Some local hospitals may provide classes for young pregnant women. Youth services can play a vital role in encouraging young parents to attend check-ups and developmental screenings.

Forward planning

Discuss with young parents what lies ahead and who can help when the baby is born – such as family (including the new grandparents).

Encourage young parents to talk to their school principal about continuing in school. Also ask them to request information on other options such as home tuition, grants and financial assistance while in school or going forward to third level.



Support/encourage young parents to:

- Check out the services in the area (support groups, counselling, etc.)
- Talk to the midwife or doctor about how they are feeling
- Talk to the other parent about how he/she feels
- Get both families involved. Talk to them about how they could do this
- Arrange a family meeting with professional support
- Get other adults involved that they trust and who are supportive and can act as mentors or advocates if necessary. Remind them that this is too big to go through alone
- Use libraries for useful reading materials
- Talk to the medical social worker at the hospital or attached to the maternity unit. S/he will have experience of working with women throughout pregnancy and can offer emotional support and practical assistance
- Make a list of people who can help in an emergency and people with whom they can discuss issues and gain support from
- Source information and classes on pregnancy and childrearing
- Be aware that many local community groups and women's groups can be a source of support
- Let them know that they can revisit their crisis pregnancy counsellor during their pregnancy and after the birth of their baby
- Look out for signs of depression and encourage the young person to talk to their GP or a counsellor

Preparing Young Fathers

Help young dads to communicate clearly with the mum about what they have to give and what type of dad they want to be. Preparing to be a father is a daunting task. It may be helpful to encourage young dads to:

- **Attend a parenting class to learn some practical skills**
- **Visit the library to get some books**
- **Ask the mum if they can attend clinic appointments with her**
- **Be supportive to the mum even if they are no longer in a relationship**
- **Seek support in communicating with each other whereby they can put the baby first and learn to communicate clearly on what is really important**
- **Talk to their family about how they can be supportive when the baby comes**
- **See a counsellor if they need a supportive non-judgmental person to talk things through with**
- **Plan how they can be involved with the baby - from the labour through to adulthood**
- **Seek out peer support, family planning education, parent education and mediation youth services**



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Young fathers should also become informed about their rights and responsibilities.

They need to know about:

- **Guardianship**
- **Custody**
- **Access**
- **Maintenance**
- **What it is like to care for a young baby**
- **How to support the mum**

Tackling childcare issues

Childcare is often the most significant barrier to young parents becoming engaged in education or employment. The high cost of childcare means that many young parents feel it is not financially viable to return to education or employment. This is especially true for those looking for unskilled or semi-skilled employment.

In many areas it is extremely difficult to secure full-time childcare places. Community crèches are limited. They can have long waiting lists and most only offer part-time childcare. Family members are often the main source of childcare for young parents; this is especially true in disadvantaged areas.



You can help young parents to think about whether they want to take time out after their baby is born to parent full-time or if they would like to return to school or work. If they choose the second option then they need to consider what childcare is available to them in their local area.

Advise them to ask themselves the following questions:

- **How much childcare will I need?**
- **How much will I be able to afford for childcare?**
- **Will I be able to apply to a local community childcare service where costs will be subsidised?**
- **How will I get to the service?**
- **Will I need childcare close to home or close to school or work?**
- **Would I like my baby to be cared for at home**
- **What back up do I have if my baby gets sick and can't attend childcare?**
- **Do I know and understand all the policies at work in relation to time off, sick leave and flexible working hours?**
- **Do I know other parents that I could talk to about their experiences of finding childcare?**
- **Will I be eligible for childcare financial support to help me return to work?**

Helping young parents understand welfare and state support

Many young parents rely on social welfare for income support. The social welfare system can be daunting for young parents due to its complexities. Many are not fully aware of their entitlements and can often feel intimidated by the level of bureaucracy and paperwork involved.

Many young parents who are parenting alone are not in receipt of maintenance payments from the child's other parent. Maintenance payments received for a child are subtracted from any social welfare payment the parent receives.

The One Parent Family Payment in the **Republic of Ireland** is the primary social welfare payment for someone parenting alone providing they are not co-habiting with a partner.

In **Northern Ireland** there is no specific payment for someone parenting alone but a wide range of financial help may be available. Support comes in the form of Child Maintenance, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, and Income Support. It may be available whether the parent is working, looking for a job or unable to work.^{xvii}

Medical Card

It is very important that a young parent not only looks after their health throughout their pregnancy but also, in order to parent well, to continuously care for their well-being. Babies and young children can get sick frequently and it is important to seek medical advice when this occurs.



In the **Republic of Ireland** attending a doctor can be very expensive and young parents should apply for a medical card if they are eligible. A Medical Card covers the cost of medication and GP visits; a GP visit card meets the cost of the consultation only. Both cards provide cover for both the parent and child. If a parent is getting the One Parent Family Payment or is on a low income then they are likely to be eligible for a medical card.

In **Northern Ireland** all costs for GP visits and prescriptions are covered by the NHS. Dental treatment is free for the mother during maternity and for one year after the baby's birth and to those under the age of 18 years.

Accommodation

Some young parents live in Supported Accommodation. Transitional supported housing schemes, comprising family type accommodation and specialist interim accommodation facilities offer safe and secure housing and individual support to help people that are homeless overcome the barriers they face in relation to finding and sustaining a tenancy. Interim housing and community-based accommodation projects aim to help young people and families develop the skills to manage their own tenancies. Family Support Services can be very positive and can very often intervene before things get to crisis point regarding accommodation.

Rent Supplement / housing benefit may be payable to solo-parents living in private rented accommodation who need help paying rent. Rent allowance in **Republic of Ireland** is restricted to those who have been privately renting for at least 6 months. This effectively could 'trap' a young parent in their family home as few can afford to pay 6 months' rent. This means the young parent and their families may have to consider sharing accommodation in the family home. Young solo-parents need to talk to their family and decide if they can live at home with their baby.

It is important to encourage young parents to consider the following options

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and how it will affect the family already in the family home. Ask them:

- **Is there room for another person in the home?**
- **Do you need your own place? If yes what benefits can you claim?**
- **Are you ready and able to live alone?**
- **Do you need family support at all times or close at hand?**
- **What other responsibilities are you taking on by living alone?**
- **Are you ready for this along with a new baby?**

See the 'Useful contacts' section at the end of this chapter for organisations that can advise young parents on what they are entitled to.



Checklist 9 - How accessible is your organisation to young parents?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young parents.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

- | | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • We advertise our service and programmes in places where young parents are likely to see them e.g. doctors surgeries and health clinics, crèches, community welfare offices and to public health nurses | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service promotes a positive image of parenting, through literature, posters etc. | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Activities/events which include young parents/families are provided and promoted | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service is represented on local boards/committees relevant to young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service links closely with parents and family members of young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • Our service is listed in local publications as offering services to young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |
|---|------------|---------------|-----------|

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- | | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • Our service has a childcare policy | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our child protection policy includes reference to young parents being supported through issues/referrals | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • We have an equal opportunity statement referring to young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young parents

- | | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • Our service has up to date figures on numbers of young parents in our target area | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Young parents are involved with programme planning | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our programme schedule reviews and invites input from young parents with regard to changes | YES | PARTLY | NO |

- | | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • Our service provides a crèche facility or provides funding towards childcare for young parents engaged in groups | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service provides transport | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our programmes run at times suitable for young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • Our service links with other organisations working with young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Staff and volunteers are trained in matters of child protection, disclosure and law regarding provision of information to young people who are pregnant | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Staff and volunteers have an awareness of the issues faced by young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service has good links with local schools, school completion programmes and other educational providers working with young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service refers young parents on to more specific services depending on needs | YES | PARTLY | NO |

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- | | | | |
|---|-----|--------|----|
| • Young parents are consulted about service provision (including those who do not access our service) | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service includes young parents in the decision making process e.g. inclusion on committees and boards of management | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Meetings are timed to allow for childcare arrangements/funding for childcare provided if necessary | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service is accessible for prams | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service provide a baby changing/feeding facility | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service offers an outreach service | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service actively encourages participation of young parents | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| • Our service is child friendly | YES | PARTLY | NO |

Useful contacts

Parenting Support & Referral Agencies (ROI)

One Family

askonefamily is a National Helpline for all one-parent families

Local Phone: 1890 66 22 12

Email: support@onefamily.ie

Web: www.onefamily.ie

One family offers a voice, support and action for one-parent families. Services include positive options counselling, ongoing support throughout and after crisis pregnancy, general counselling, information and support on a range of topics, parenting and self development courses, training for professionals, campaigning and lobbying.

One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN)

The national network of local lone parent self-help groups

Phone: 01 - 8320264

Email: enquiries@oneparent.ie

Web: www.oneparent.ie

OPEN have also produced '[Everybody Knows ...](#)' – an information pack containing brief information sheets summarising statistics about one-parent families in Ireland aimed at dispelling myths about lone parenting in Ireland.

Treoir

Local Phone: 1890 252 084

Email: info@treoir.ie

Web: www.treoir.ie

Treoir have produced a series of booklets for young parents and their families

Community Mothers	Community Mothers is a support service provided by local women for parents living in their community. Parents are visited in their own home and support, guidance and information is offered. Talk to your Public Health Nurse to find out if the service is available in your area
Family Resource Centres	Offer support, information and special services for those in need of extra family support. For details of your nearest Family Resource Centre and for a copy of the Support for Families Directory contact the Family Support Agency.
Phone: 01 - 611 4100	
Web: www.fsa.ie	
Teen Parents Support Programme	Emotional and practical support and information for young parents. Contact the National Co-ordinator.
Phone: 01 - 670 0167	
National Association for Parent Support	Provides information and advice on parenting matters.
Phone: (0502) 61666	
Cuidiú, The Irish Childbirth Trust	An organisation that provides support and education for parents together with information and classes on pregnancy and child rearing.
Carmichael House, Nth Brunswick St, Dublin 7	
Phone: 01 - 872 4501	
Email: info@cuidiu-ict.ie	
Web: www.cuidiu-ict.ie	

Parentline**Phone:** 01 - 8733500/878 7230**Local phone:** 1890 92 7277**Email:** parentline@eircom.net**Web:** www.parentline.ie

Is a support youth service for parents and guardians. They also have a face to face support youth service. They offer a helpline for parents experiencing difficulty or stress

Social welfare information is available from: www.welfare.ie or by phone

Maternity Benefit phone: 1890 690 690

One Parent Family Payment phone: 1890 500 000

Child Benefit phone: 1890 400 400

Family Income Support phone: 1890 92 77 70

Parenting Support & Referral Agencies (NI)

<p>Parenting NI Phone: 0808 8010 722 Web: www.parentingni.org</p>	<p>Provides support to parents through a helpline, parenting education and a parenting forum.</p>
<p>Gingerbread NI Phone: 0808 808 8090 Web: www.gingerbreadni.org</p>	<p>Gingerbread works with and for lone parents and their children in NI.</p>
<p>Family Support NI Phone: 0845 600 6483 Web: www.familysupportni.gov.uk</p>	<p>The Health and Social Care Board for NI has developed the Family Support website which gives details of a wide range of organisations that provide help and support to families.</p>
<p>Brook Phone: 0808 802 1234 Web: www.brook.org.uk</p>	<p>Provides free and confidential information for under 25s around sexual health.</p>
<p>NI Direct Government Services Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk</p>	<p>One stop shop website for government services such as benefits and financial support, social housing, employment, education etc.</p>
<p>Family Planning Association Phone: 0845 122 8687 Web: www.fpa.org.uk</p>	<p>Provides straightforward information, advice and support on sexual health, sex and relationships</p>

Social welfare information is available from:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Moneyandworkentitlements/YourMoney/DG_4003043

This chapter was developed by Tracey Friel (Youth Work Ireland), Geraldine Brereton (One Family) and Niamh O'Carolan (Youthnet) with input from Tracy Healy (Shepherds View Young Parent's Programme) and Eliz McArdle (YouthAction NI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

Counselling (ROI)

<p>Positive Options</p> <p>Website: www.positiveoptions.ie</p> <p>Freetext: LIST to 50444</p>	<p>This service is free of charge and gives opportunities to young women experiencing a crisis pregnancy to explore their feelings and to discuss options that are open to them in confidence and privacy.</p>
<p>One Family</p>	<p>See contact details above</p>
<p>The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)</p> <p>60 Amiens Street, Dublin 1</p> <p>Phone: 01 - 8069444</p> <p>Fax: 01 - 8069445</p> <p>Email: post@ifpa.ie</p>	<p>Provides sexual and reproductive health information, clinical youth services, counselling youth services, education, training and awareness raising.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual and Reproductive Health Youth services • Pregnancy Counselling Youth service • Education and Training Youth service
<p>Life Pregnancy Care Youth service</p> <p>Local Phone: 1850 281281</p> <p>SMS (text): 086 6638253</p> <p>Web: www.life.ie</p>	<p>Is an Irish organisation dedicated to counselling women with crisis pregnancies. They have five centres around Ireland.</p>
<p>CURA</p> <p>Local Phone: 1850 622626</p> <p>Web: www.cura.ie/index.htm</p>	<p>Is a voluntary organisation which offers support and help to those who are faced with a crisis pregnancy.</p>

Family Resource Centres	Offer low-cost and free pregnancy counselling services.
See above	
Irish Council for Psychotherapy	Details of psychotherapists are available on the 'Find a Psychotherapist' section of website.
Phone: 01 - 272 2105	
Email: info@icpty.ie	
Web: www.psychotherapy-ireland.com	
Accord Catholic Marriage Counselling Service	Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)
Phone: 01 - 5053112	Phone: 01 - 230 0061
Email: admin@accord.ie	Email: iacp@irish-counselling.ie
Web: www.accord.ie	Web: www.irish-counselling.ie
	IACP operates a telephone referral service.

Counselling (NI)

Family Planning Association	See above
Care in Crisis	Offers a professional, caring and confidential help and support to individuals, couples and families experiencing a range of problems and difficulties.
Phone: 38329900	
Web: www.careincrisis.org.uk	
Relate NI	Offers relationship and family counselling services.
Phone: 90323454	
Web: www.relateni.org	

<p>Pregnancy Matters Phone: 90249414 Web: www.pregmatters.org.uk</p>	<p>Provides counselling and support services before and after birth.</p>
<p>Nexus Phone: 90326803 Web: www.patient.co.uk/support/Nexus-Institute.htm</p>	<p>Provide counselling and support to anyone over the age of 16 years, who has been sexually abused at any time in his or her life. They offer one-to-one counselling, group therapy, support groups and a range of client workshops.</p>

Mediation (North and South)

<p>Family Mediation Service Phone: 01 - 6344320 Email: fmsearlfort@welfare.ie</p>	<p>A free mediation service for couples who have decided to separate or divorce.</p>
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<p>Family Mediation NI Phone: 90243265 Web: www.familymediationni.org.uk</p>	<p>Mediation service to help parents communicate, reach agreements and focus on the child's needs.</p>
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<p>Mediators Institute of Ireland Phone: 01 - 2828952 Email: info@mediatorsinstituteofireland.ie Web: www.mediatonireland.com</p>	<p>The professional association for practitioner mediators mainly in the Republic of Ireland.</p>
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The Crisis Pregnancy Agency
 4th Floor, 89 – 94 Capel Street,
 Dublin 1
Phone: 01 - 814 6292
Fax: 01 - 814 6282
Email: info@crisispregnancy.ie
Web: www.crisispregnancy.ie

A planning and co-ordinating body established to formulate and implement a strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland through education, advice, counselling and such other health youth services for the purpose of providing support, after crisis pregnancy

Childcare (ROI)

Pre-school Officers
Web: www.hse.ie or
www.dcy.gov.ie

A information leaflet for parents of pre-school children is available from the Health Services Executive (HSE) or Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)

City/County Childcare Committees
Phone: 01 - 635 4000
Web: www.pobal.ie or
www.dcy.gov.ie

County Childcare Committees will have lists of registered childcare services for your area. Local Childcare Committees can be contacted through your Local Authority.

The Border Counties Childcare Network (BCCN)
Phone: (047) 72469
Web: www.bccn.ie

BCCN operates in the counties of Monaghan, Meath, Louth, Cavan, Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. BCCN supports the development of a coordinated approach to the delivery of high quality, accessible, affordable early childhood services.

<p>IPPA - The Early Childhood organisation</p> <p>Phone: 01 - 463 0010</p> <p>Web: www.ippa.ie</p>	<p>IPPA, the Early Childhood organisation, is a nationwide practice based organisation, representing members including playgroups, parent and toddler groups, full day care groups, after-school, out-of-school groups and individual members.</p>
<p>The Childcare Directory</p> <p>Web: www.childcare.ie</p>	<p>The Childcare Directory Ltd provides information on finding childcare solutions in local areas.</p>
<p>The National Children’s Nursery Association (NCNA)</p> <p>Phone: 01 - 460 1138</p> <p>Web: www.ncna.net</p>	<p>The National Children’s Nursery Association provides advice, support and training for member nurseries as well as raising public awareness regarding issues affecting the childcare sector.</p>

Childcare (NI)

<p>Childminding Ireland</p> <p>Phone: 01 - 287 8466</p> <p>Web: www.childminding.ie</p>	<p>Childminding Ireland, the National Association for Childminders, is the only organisation in Ireland dedicated to working for childminding; providing information, advice and support to childminders and parents</p>
<p>Family Support NI</p>	<p>See contact details above</p>

NICMA (NI Childminding Association) Delivering a high quality childminding experience to children and families in NI
Phone: 0871 200 2063
Web: www.nicma.org

Employers for Childcare A registered charity and not-for-profit organisation, set up to assist working parents by encouraging businesses to invest in employer-supported childcare
Phone: 0800 028 6538
Web: www.employersforchildcare.org

Education

Aontas The National Association of Adult Education offer an internet based information referral service.
Web: www.aontas.com/inforeferrals.html

Treoir See above

Local Employment Service (LES) Contact the employment services officer in your nearest FAS office.
Phone: 01 - 607 050
Web: www.fas.ie

The Adult Education Officer/VTOS coordinator/The Adult Education Guidance Service in your local Vocational Education Committee 24 Adult education guidance projects are available throughout the country. To find out if there is a project near you telephone the National Centre for Guidance in Education.
Phone: 01 - 8690 715/6
Web: www.ncge.ie/adult_details.htm

<p>Youth Information Centres (YICs) www.youthinformation.ie/</p>	<p>Can provide young parents with information. Check out the website to locate your nearest YIC</p>
<p>The Education Coordinator in your local Partnership Company. Phone: 01 - 240 0700</p>	<p>To find out if there is a Partnership Company in your area call Area Development Management (ADM)</p>
<p>EGSA (Educational Guidance Service for Adults) Phone: 90244274 Web: www.egsa.org.uk</p>	<p>Aims to encourage all adults to engage in learning and manage their careers.</p>

Legal

<p>AIM family services Phone: 01 - 6708363 Email: aimfamilyservices@eircom.net Web: www.aimfamilyservices.ie</p>	<p>AIM is a voluntary organisation which offers non-directive counselling, legal information, and a family mediation service to people experiencing marital, relationship and family problems</p>
<p>Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) Phone: 01 - 874 5690 Email: info@flac.ie Web: www.flac.ie</p>	<p>The Free Legal Advice Service is a non-governmental organisation which campaigns for full and equal access to justice for all</p>
<p>Legal Aid Board Phone: 066 - 9471000 Web: www.legalaidboard.ie</p>	

The Courts Service

Phone: 01 - 888 6000

Web: www.courts.ie

The Court Service is a statutory body set up to manage the courts and provide information on the courts to the public.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Phone: 90261970

Web: www.adviceguide.org.uk/nireland

Is the largest advice charity in NI and helps people resolve their debt, benefits, housing, legal, discrimination, employment, immigration, consumer and other problems

NI Legal Services Commission

Phone: 90408888

Web: www.nilsc.org.uk

NILSC aims to promote fair and equal access to justice in NI in its provision of publicly funded legal services

Other Web-Based Resource Sites

www.teenparents.ie/iopen24/

www.rollercoaster.ie - pregnancy and parenting website, including forum on parenting issues

www.solo.ie/

www.mammy.ie/

www.youngfathers.net/

www.young-fathers.org.uk/

www.da-youngfathersproject.co.uk

www.studyofadolescence.org.uk/research/projects_completed/young_fathers.html

www.barnardos.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

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www.amh.org.uk (Action Mental Health)

www.mindwisenv.org

www.housingadviceni.org

www.brysongroup.org

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