

LONE PARENTS AND CHILDCARE

THE CASE FOR ACTION⁴

This briefing paper represents an overview of recent childcare policy work undertaken by One Parent Exchange and Network. The Network has informed this area of work through submissions to and representation on Partnership 2000 and the Expert Working Group on Childcare as well as a seminar for members in Tralee in November 1997. As always childcare remains an integral part of the policy work of OPEN.

All parents need good quality affordable childcare if they want to go to work, to improve their skills through studying or training, to get respite from full-time care – or even to go out and have fun.

Most children are looked after by a partner, a relative or a friend while their parents are out. At least 45% of working mothers with dependent children in our nearest neighbour Britain use this kind of informal childcare – only 23% use formal paid childcare. Informal care can be used by parents who have to work at weekends and evenings or on shifts. It is usually free or very low cost.

Lone parents have particular problems in finding childcare. They do not have a partner to turn to. With the break-up of the family, many of them have lost contact with the networks of friends and relations who might have offered informal childcare. Without free or low-cost childcare, lone parents face:

- Difficulty in taking up employment - 77% of lone parents in the UK say that childcare problems prevent them leaving Social Security Support compared with 15% of couples.
- Barriers to studying or training.
- Limited opportunities to take part in community activities, leaving them and their children socially isolated.
- Poverty for families and children, as borne out by Eurostat figures.

The provision of childcare in Ireland broadly falls into the following categories:

- Community pre-school playgroups
- Health Board funded nurseries
- Home based playgroups
- Home based childminders
- Private Nurseries
- Early Start Programme

⁴ OPEN Network

WORK⁵

Table 2

Labour Force Participation Rates (%)

Categories	1990	1993	1997
Married women without children	29.79	35.48	41.73
Married women with children	23.64	30.67	38.28
Female Lone Parents	19.27	24.61	32.14

Resourcing & Sustaining Childcare Provision⁶

Who Pays?

The argument for specific resources to support better childcare provision has many facets. Some are related to the development and social needs of children, others to support for families where a lone parent or both parents are in paid work, or wish to access education or training to enhance their skills, take up community work or leisure activities.

The cost of full-time care within a crèche has been estimated at £60-70 per week. Many home-based childminders charge upwards of £40-£50 per week. Charges at community based playgroups vary but are pre-dominantly for part-time care and start at £8.00-£10.00 per week for sessional/half day care. Those who are parenting alone must find these costs themselves.

If at work, lone parents can earn £115.38 per week and still receive their social welfare payment, both payments are taxable. From his/her net income a lone parent then pays the household bills as well as other child-related costs including childcare. For lone parents who earn over £12,000 per year, there is no social welfare payment.

Some lone parents who are not working choose to place their children in a community playgroup setting for any number of reasons including:

- Caring for other children and/or adults in the home,
- To aid their child's social and educational development
- To attend hospital and other appointments
- To get a well-earned and regular breather from full-time, **i.e. 24 hours per day**, parenting.

Labour Force Surveys 1990, 1993,1997, Central Statistics Office

⁶ OPEN position paper

All unemployed parents can apply to their health board to receive help with the costs of playgroup attendance locally. The payment is usually between £6-£8 per week and is paid directly to the playgroup organiser.

It is a fact that most community-based projects do not have the resources to employ the staff they need. They are set in disadvantaged areas, finances are tight and the only way of providing childcare is to tap into state run schemes, indeed in many such areas the Community Employment Programme is used to fund childcare staffing provision. The one-year duration of schemes hampers both the provision of childcare and the sustainable employment prospects of staff in the affected areas.⁷

One Parent Families National Facts & Figures

One Parent Family Payment

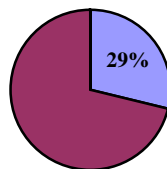
The One-Parent Family Payment rate in 2001 for a non-earning lone parent with one dependant child was €127.86 (£100.70). In Budget 2002 the payment was raised marginally to €138.10 (£108.76).

By mid-2001, 75,272 lone parents depended on this inadequate payment as a consistent source of income.

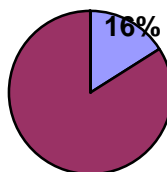
62.1% of all recipients of the One-Parent Family Payment Family have 1 child.

In 1999, 97.3% (68,454) recipients of the One-Parent Family Payment were women.

Poverty



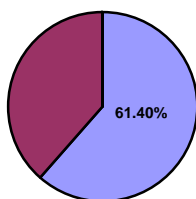
Over 29% of all lone parent households are at risk of living in poverty.



16% of all children living below the 50% poverty line are part of a one-parent family.

⁷ Funding from JELR now provides a longer period of funding for staff costs

Employment



The ILO (International Labour Organisation) survey shows that the labour force participation rate of one parent with children of any age in 1997 was 38.6%; therefore, 61.4% of lone parents are unemployed.

LONE PARENTS IN NORTH TIPPERARY⁸

SUM OF NO. OF RECS OFFICE NAME	PEN TYPE							Grand Total
	10	11	13	18	19	79	80	
A.I.B., BORRISOKANE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
A.I.B., PEARSE ST., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
A.I.B., TEMPLEMORE	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
A.I.B., THURLES	1	0	2	0	0	6	1	10
AGLISH P. O., ROSCREA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
ARDCRONEY P. O., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
B.O.I., NENAGH, CO. TIPP.	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
B.O.I., TEMPLEMORE, CO. TIPP.	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
B.O.I., THURLES	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
BALLINGARRY P.O., ROSCREA	0	0	4	0	1	2	0	7
BALLINGARRY P.O., THURLES	6	1	5	0	1	9	0	22
BALLINURE P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
BALLYCAHILL P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
BALLYNONTY P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
BORRISOKANE P.O., CO. TIPP.	3	0	3	0	2	13	1	22
BORRISOLEIGH P.O., THURLES	3	0	1	0	2	9	0	15
CARRIGAHORIG P.O., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	5
CASTLEINEY P.O., TEMPLEMORE	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
CLONAKENNY P.O., ROSCREA	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
COOLBAWN P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
CROSSPATRICK P.O., THURLES	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
CURREENEY P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
DOLLA P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
DOVEA P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

⁸ Dept Social and Family Affairs, November 2002

DROMBANE P.O., THURLES	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
DUNDRUM P.O., TIPPERARY	1	0	3	0	2	11	0	17
EMLY P.O., TIPPERARY	2	0	2	1	3	6	0	14
GORTNAHOE P.O., THURLES	1	0	2	1	0	9	0	13
HOLYCROSS P.O., THURLES	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	7
KILLENAULE P.O., THURLES	9	1	6	0	0	18	1	35
KNOCK P.O., BIRR, ROSCREA	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
LITTLETON P.O., THURLES	3	0	4	0	1	9	0	17
LOUGHMORE P.O., TEMPLEMORE	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	4
MOYNE P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
MULLINAHONE P.O., THURLES	1	4	3	0	1	13	0	22
NENAGH P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	32	4	29	1	16	151	3	236
NEW BIRMINGHAM P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	7
NEWTOWN P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
PORTROE P.O., NENAGH	1	0	1	0	0	5	1	8
PUCKANE P.O., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
RATHCABBIN P.O., ROSCREA	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	6
ROSCREA P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	13	1	15	1	5	87	2	124
SILVERMINES P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TEMPLEDERRY P.O., NENAGH	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
TEMPLEMORE P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	9	1	12	0	3	44	1	70
TEMPLETOUHY P.O., THURLES	2	0	1	0	0	5	1	9
THE COMMONS P.O., THURLES	1	0	2	0	0	8	0	11
THURLES P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	51	7	42	0	18	222	1	341
TOOMEVARA P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	9
TOUR P.O., NEWPORT	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
T.S.B., 11/13 PEARSE ST., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
TWO MILE BORRIS P.O., THURLES	1	0	7	0	0	6	2	16
UPPER CHURCH P.O., THURLES	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
GRAND TOTAL	150	20	151	6	57	702	16	1102

PEN TYPES

10	=	Deserted Wives Benefit
11	=	Deserted Wives Allowance
13	=	Lone Parents (unmarried)
18	=	Lone Parents (widowed)
19	=	Lone Parents (separated)
79	=	One Parent Family Payment 1
80	=	One Parent Family Payment 2

Feedback from research participants

Barnardos

Lone Parents and their children are supported in the Barnardo Project in Thurles through group, individual and family work. The crèche provision facilitates child development work and provides space for parents to engage in project services. This provision is limited however because of lack of space and daycare staff. The service users are prohibited from engaging in ongoing training and education because of lack of childcare provision in the area. The project has just secured funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for the provision of a full and sessional day care service.

Service Providers Survey

7% of current service users were identified as Lone Parents.

Parents Survey

One Lone Parent interviewed is currently spending 45% of disposable income on childcare for two children – exclusive of travel and lunches which cost extra.

Household Survey

Eleven Lone Parents were interviewed as part of the general household survey and the following are the key findings –

- Two use sessional childcare
- Three use childminders – one a relation and all three use part time/after school care
- Two are working as childminders.

Key Findings On Special Needs

- Back up services required include speech and language, psychological service, occupational and physical therapies.
- There is a need to provide educational package for mainstream services if they are to provided places for children with special needs

Feedback from Survey of Service Providers.

- 1) There is an urgent need for major improvements in speech therapy services.
- 2) These children require lots of social interaction with other verbal children. They are treated like all others (in our service) but require more observation to identify illness and behaviour problems.
- 3) Staff need extra training course. Children with special needs are very insecure and nervous and require a lot of patience and understanding.

- 4) Children with special needs can become frustrated leading to behavioural problems.
- 5) No one has ever asked me to take a child with special needs – I would have no problem if asked.
- 6) I take one special child per group My service has been recommended by speech therapists and the Mid Western Health board to benefit from integration before national school.
- 7) Recently any child with special needs has had a carer with them provided by Mid Western Health Board.
- 8) Physically my premises is not wheelchair accessible.
- 9) We provide three places for special needs
- 10) There is a need for special needs assistant courses.
- 11) Childminding service is needed for children with special needs.
- 12) There is a need for more back up services from psychologists and speech therapists “you are working very much on your own”.

Mid-Western Health Board

- More funding is required for special assistants
- No profile / data base is currently kept of children with special needs who have requested access to a childcare service
- More funding is required for back up supports/therapists
- Appropriate resource materials are needed to ensure quality experience for the child.