



**ONE FAMILY'S
ANNUAL REVIEW 2007**



“I would like to thank our supporters, funders, friends and all the one-parent families we have worked with during the year”

Chair's Statement

2007 marked the beginning of a new journey for One Family as we came to the end of our Strategy 2004-2006 and embarked on our Strategy 2007-2009. Having reflected on the achievements and impacts of our Strategy 2004-2006, 2007 provided an opportunity to carry the lessons of the previous three years forward into a bright and positive future for One Family and our clients.

We didn't waste much time launching into a series of highly successful events and activities in 2007. In March, we held a significant seminar on Divorce & Children at which several key international and Irish speakers spoke about the need to put children firmly at the centre of separation and divorce proceedings. Held on the tenth anniversary of divorce in Ireland, the seminar provided a real opportunity to increase the understanding of children's experience of divorce and to reflect on how best to meet their needs in this legal process. One Family continued this important area of work by securing funding for a major research project on **Child & Family Contact Centres** which will be finalised and launched in 2008.

Continuing our work on national policy affecting one-parent families in Ireland, One Family also began vital research on **Lone Parents & Employment** in September 2007. This research is aimed at informing the Government's proposals to make significant changes in the way it supports lone parents on the One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) and qualified adults. Questionnaires were sent to 8000 parents on the One-Parent Family Payment, culminating in a response rate of over 20%. This research, funded by the Combat Poverty Agency and supported by the Department of Social and

Family Affairs, will provide real insight into the needs of lone parents in moving from social welfare into education, training and employment. One Family continues to work closely with the Department of Social and Family Affairs to ensure that lone parents are fully supported to move out of poverty and social exclusion and looks forward to developing this partnership further and mainstreaming the learning when the research is launched in 2008.

I would like to thank all the one-parent families, supporters, funders, friends and others we have worked with during the year who have made all these achievements possible. I particularly want to acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of our staff and Board members who worked extremely hard over the past year. I hope as always that you will continue to share our vision to ensure that every family in Ireland will be cherished equally, and will enjoy the social, financial and legal equality necessary to create their own positive future.

Ian Mitchell Chair

Chair, One Family

We would like to thank outgoing Chair, Dr Fergus Ryan, who has been a tremendous support to the organisation. Our sincere thanks to Dr. Ryan for his invaluable contribution to One Family.



“I would like to thank again the thousands of one-parent families we have worked with”

Message from the Director

2007 marked the 35th Anniversary of One Family's birth as Cherish in 1972. We celebrated this occasion by honouring former President Mary Robinson who was president of the organisation for many years, at a major event in Dublin Castle attended by founders, clients, supporters and One Family staff and Board.

This celebratory event gave us the opportunity to reflect on the huge changes in Irish society and in One Family over the years and to mark the achievements of Cherish's founders, who created a movement responding to the needs of single mothers and their children who were considered "illegitimate" at the time. The huge impact that the founders of Cherish had at both a national and individual level continues to inspire our work in One Family. We strive to make a difference to individual clients through our direct service provision, while also providing a voice for one-parent families at a national policy level.

During the process of writing One Family's Strategy 2007-2009, our Family Services Team had an opportunity to reflect on the needs of our clients and to ensure that we are providing relevant, useful services to the one-parent families we work with. Services were re-evaluated, resulting in the honing of our existing services and the establishment of our Parent Mentoring service which was successfully piloted in 2006 and grew substantially throughout 2007.

2007 saw the end of One Family's pilot New Futures Project, which was rolled out under the Equality for Women Measure (EWM). The New Futures Project is an integrated model of support for lone parents,

dealing particularly with the personal barriers that exist for lone parents in progressing from welfare dependency to employment. The pilot project proved hugely successful and we will be working to mainstream the learning in 2008.

We are delighted to have delivered 6789 services to our clients in 2007, an increase of over 5% on 2006. Our typical clients in 2007 were women parenting alone or sharing parenting (86%). These clients were mainly in the 25-39 age range and most were in education, training or part-time employment and receiving social welfare. 14% of our clients were male; we continue to promote our services to dads parenting alone or sharing parenting.

We also continued to provide a voice for the issues affecting one-parent families in Ireland through our policy and media work, leveraging our 35 years of experience working with this client group into expertise that makes a real difference to the lives of one-parent families. I would like to thank again the thousands of one-parent families who have accessed our services and who have contributed hugely to how we have developed as an organisation and continue to drive our work as we strive to provide the best services we can for lone parents and their families.

Karen Kiernan
Director, One Family

One Family Values

In One Family we work from a place of **respect** and **acceptance** of the parents, children and organisations that we come in contact with.

We work with **compassion**, which means that we connect with others in a relationship of equals and we are completely **non-judgmental**.

We believe that we can **hold the hope** for the families we work with, especially when they are unable to.

We achieve this through **innovation, excellence, determination** and our **client-centred approach**.

One Family is an organisation of great **courage** as it has been from its foundation and we continue to work with **integrity** to ensure **equality** for all one-parent families in Ireland.



“Today I am proud of being a lone parent”

One Family Services

Building Strong Families...

One Family Services work with individual clients to improve the lives of lone parents and their children. We work with people parenting alone and those sharing parenting in a non-judgemental and compassionate environment to ensure that our clients are empowered to build positive futures for their families. Many of our clients come to us in times of great stress and in need of support; we hold the hope for the families we work with in their times of need, knowing that they will come through the other side and take that hope forward with them as they build their futures.

“It is a FACT that One Family saved my life in many ways. I learnt the most important things and tools here in this organisation. Today I am proud of being a lone parent, knowing in my heart that my daughter and me we are a family... my weeks, my months, my two years were built around One Family, their support, information and encouragement. Step by step I found back my self-confidence and I started getting my head up in a totally new way.”

Christine



2007 marked exciting developments in the delivery of One Family Services. Through the strategic planning process, One Family Services were streamlined to provide more effective, holistic services best suited to meet the needs of One Family's clients; training and education programmes are offered in conjunction with parenting programmes and individual information and counselling supports. 2007 saw a 5.25% increase in the number of One Family services delivered to one-parent families from 2006.

2007 saw the introduction of our already popular New Futures programme, a training and support programme for lone parents who wish to move on to training, education and employment, which had been piloted in local employment services around the country. New Futures provides a structured environment where participants develop the self-knowledge and skills to explore the choices and opportunities open to them. Participants develop an individualised career action plan and move on to training, education and employment on completion

of the programme. We also continued to provide Computer Skills training for clients. All of these programmes are FETAC accredited and aim to support clients in overcoming any barriers they may face in progressing into education, training and employment.

One Family was delighted to continue our collaboration with Marks and Spencer through the Marks & Start programme throughout 2007.



Marks & Start provides

One Family clients with an opportunity to take part in a three day specialist training followed by a two week work experience placement with Marks and Spencer in Dublin. Parents receive invaluable experience, particularly those who may not have previously worked in a formal employment environment. This programme provides an opportunity to increase their confidence in going into the workforce with proven experience under their belt.

Clients taking part in One Family training programmes continued to be supported on a one-to-one basis through our Guidance Sessions which provide confidential individual support and career guidance.

One Family's parenting programmes continued to deliver in depth parenting classes through our Positive Parenting and Family



Communications

programmes. 2007 saw the continued growth and development of our Parent Mentoring service, which works with parents on a one-to-one basis to look at challenging behaviours in the family and to understand why the behaviour is happening. Parent Mentoring helps parents become aware of their own behaviour and other behaviour in the home in order to examine what effect this is having on children. Children often reflect the behaviours they see around them, so by looking at the whole family, Parent Mentoring helps parents to really understand and address challenging behaviour in themselves and their children. Parents are the greatest role models for their children; Parent Mentoring gives parents the opportunity to improve how they communicate with and teach their children.

Parent Mentoring Case Studies

One Family's Parent Mentor has been working with numerous clients experiencing a range of parenting challenges. The following are just some of the issues that Parent Mentoring is helping lone parents to manage:

Joe is a single dad who didn't have any access to his daughter until she was two years old. Before he came to One Family, Joe had been struggling through the family law system and now faced a new set of challenges in getting to know his daughter and forming a relationship with her. He also wanted support to form a relationship with his daughter's mother in order to co-parent with her and provide the best parenting situation for his daughter.

After attending monthly Mentoring sessions for seven months Joe had made huge progress in overcoming his initial challenges. Having successfully formed a positive relationship with his daughter and her mother, he moved on to examine other useful parenting skills such as understanding and managing his daughter's behaviour and is getting on very well. Mentoring helped Joe to establish his own parenting style and gave him confidence in his role as a dad.

Separated parents Margaret and Karl

attended One Family's Parent Mentoring sessions separately to deal with issues around shared parenting. They had been having difficulty establishing parenting values that they were both happy with and separating their relationships with their children from their own relationship. Through Mentoring, Margaret and Karl dealt with a lot of their own issues and found positive ways of communicating with each other for their children's benefit. They each developed their own parenting style while sticking to agreed values that are helping them to co-parent successfully.

Steve, a divorced dad, was having difficulty approaching his children about his new relationship. Julia is his first serious relationship since the breakdown of his marriage and they both wanted support in how best to introduce Julia to Steve's children. Our Parent Mentor helped Steve and Julia to look at the possible issues that might arise for his children and the best ways to support them in this difficult transition period. Through Parent Mentoring, Steve and Julia were able to support his children to develop a positive relationship with Julia, who now gets on well with them

*All names have been changed

Following the evaluation and restructuring of service delivery, 2007 saw the first complete year of delivery for the newly streamlined One Family Counselling Service. The service model has proved very popular and allows clients to better access supports



to meet their individual needs: **Long-term**

Counselling provides ongoing counselling sessions to explore unresolved personal, relationship and family issues that need to be dealt with over time, in the knowledge that long term support is available at One Family. **Solution Focused Sessions** allows clients to attend for 1-3 sessions to deal with a particular issue, without requiring an ongoing commitment to the therapeutic process. This service has proved hugely popular with clients in dealing with specific difficulties they are facing at a given time.

Crisis Pregnancy

Counselling offers non-directive Crisis Pregnancy

Counselling to both women and couples experiencing crisis pregnancy. As part of



the Positive Options campaign

(www.positiveoptions.ie), fully qualified counsellors explore all options with the client and provide information as required. For those who decide to proceed with pregnancy, One Family offers regular, ongoing practical support (available to both parents and other family members) through pregnancy and following birth. **Post-termination Counselling** is open to anyone who has experienced abortion and feels there are issues and emotions they need to work through. Men, women and other family members can avail of the service.



Askonefamily*, One Family's National helpline and email support service continued to provide information to one-parent families on a range of

issues such as social welfare entitlements and issues, family law, housing, health, education, employment, childcare and parenting.

The national helpline provides a lo-call service for one-parent families across Ireland. Calls are received from across the country from parents in urban and rural communities. For some there is an abundance of local services and for others it can be more difficult to access the services they may require. The flexibility of the helpline times and that calls can be handled outside of these times means that we provide a needs-led service with a quick response time.

For those parents who may be juggling parenting and full-time work our email support service **support@onefamily.ie** allows lone parents to contact us at a convenient time with a guarantee of a swift response tailored to their individual needs.

Information sessions were developed in 2007. These sessions are available to in-house clients, who may already be engaged with One Family services, as well as to helpline callers where a face to face session may be more appropriate to their needs. This model reflects the holistic supports in place in providing an integrated service to One Family clients.

Our website (www.onefamily.ie) continues to provide useful information including further contacts and a range of publications particular to the needs of one-parent families such as returning to education or employment or support when a relationship ends.

As always, One Family's childcare service underpinned the running of all our services, allowing clients access to free, onsite childcare whenever they are



using our services. One Family's crèche works with the children in a play based environment where all learning comes through play. Over 2200 places were taken up in our crèche in 2007.

"In my own opinion I will look at One Family as a good farmer, who came across unfertile soil. Under this unfertile soil, there was "lack of hope", no focus, lack of ambition, stress and many others. The farmer (One Family) then preserved it, in order to make it fertile. The crops that later came out were very fruitful. These included confidence, ambition, wide focus, room to change, hope, love, etc."

Jane



“Parents expressed a renewed confidence and pleasure in parenting as a result of having quality relaxation time with their children.”

Celebrating Families

International Day of the Family falls on 15 May each year and provides an opportunity to celebrate family with our clients. In 2007, over 20 families joined us on a trip to Dublin Zoo! We held a big picnic and organised a clown show for the children. Our experience has shown that many one-parent families do not recognise themselves as a viable family in Irish society; celebrating International Day of the Family allows the families we work with to celebrate the unique and worthwhile family they have and to enjoy this with other parents and children.

Sixteen families joined us on our annual **Summer Holiday** in 2007. The holiday aims to allow families the opportunity to strengthen the process of mutual support they have begun to develop while accessing other services in One Family and to allow families to visit places and take part in activities that they would not be able to otherwise access. Parents had an opportunity to actively play and interact with their children in a safe and happy environment with lots of child friendly activities throughout the weekend, while also enjoying the company of other parents. Isolation and loneliness are often mentioned by lone parents as challenges to parenting alone. During the holiday, parents can enjoy each other's company as well as their children's!



Upon their return the families were all rested and relaxed and had formed lasting friendships. For some of the families this was the first family holiday they had ever had. Parents expressed a renewed confidence and pleasure in parenting as a result of having quality relaxation time with their children.

We had a very high turnout for our **Summer Graduation** in 2007. Graduation marks the end of the training year and is a celebratory event where we recognise the fantastic achievements our clients have made. Itsa Bagel (www.itsabagel.com) Director and Irish Times food writer, Domini Kemp, launched the Graduation and gave a moving speech to graduates at the Ceremony. The Ceremony was followed by a family party, where parents, children and One Family Board, staff and supporters enjoyed a clown show and festivities!



“A key area of One Family’s policy work in 2007 concerned the need for research and action”

One Family Policy

Working for fundamental change

One Family Policy works to effect fundamental societal change on issues that impact on the lives of one-parent families. We raise awareness of the issues that lone parents and their children face and work to achieve real change at a national policy level in a number of key areas aimed at making a measurable difference to the quality of life of one-parent families. We believe in an Ireland where one-parent families enjoy the equality necessary to build their own positive futures; our policy work strives to increase the effectiveness of public policy and is vital to realising the rights of one-parent families.

A key area of One Family’s policy work in 2007 concerned the need for research and action on the supports available for families during divorce and separation proceedings. We held a successful seminar on Divorce & Children in 2007, highlighting the need for children and their wellbeing to be put firmly at the centre of such proceedings. Family law experts Geoffrey Shannon, Inge Clissman, Fergus Ryan, Carol Coulter and Rachael Kelsey spoke at the seminar, providing their views on family law proceedings and gaps in support for children during divorce and separation proceedings (papers can be found at www.onefamily.ie). The seminar highlighted One Family’s belief that families must be supported before, during and after divorce if we are to ensure the best outcomes for children. One Family Policy continued this area of work by securing funding from the Family Support Agency for research into **Child & Family Contact Centres**, which will be

published in 2008. This body of work will investigate the experiences of families in divorce, separation proceedings and relationship mediation in Ireland and will investigate the role that Contact Centres can have in these often fraught and difficult situations, drawing on international experience and the view of a range of family law experts and parents who have experienced divorce/separation procedures.

One Family Policy also continued to campaign strongly on changes in state supports for lone parents and to work actively with Government, State agencies and partner organisations to ensure that “activation strategies” proposed by Government to make changes in social welfare supports for lone parents reflect the reality on the ground for one-parent families. In order to further inform Government policy in this area, One Family received funding from the Combat Poverty Agency to conduct a national survey of lone parents in Ireland on the issue of employment and social welfare. Supported by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, 8000 questionnaires were sent to lone parents on the One-Parent Family Payment (OFF) in September 2007. The returned questionnaires will form the basis of a research report (publication 2008) aimed at ensuring their lone parents’ voices are heard by those policy makers making decisions that affect their lives.



Rachael Kelsey, solicitor and former Chair of the Family Law Association in Scotland, Geoffrey Shannon, Solicitor and Senior Lecturer in Family and Child Law with the Law Society and Karen Kiernan, Director of One Family at One Family’s seminar on Divorce & Children.

One Family's Campaigning and Advocacy Network (can*) continued to thrive in 2007. We conducted a national survey of all those lone parents, professionals and others who make up our Network to better understand how can* members can best participate in One Family and make their voices heard. As a result of this survey, One Family is developing a new membership strategy that will build on our already committed and driven membership to engage all those who work to further the rights of one-parent families in Ireland.



Mary Robinson and Dr Fergus Ryan with former Board and staff members of Cherish at the 35th Anniversary Lunch, Dublin Castle, May 2007.

35 Years and Counting!

One Family celebrated our 35th Anniversary in May 2007 with a luncheon in Dublin Castle honouring the organisation's former President, Mary Robinson. Marking the occasion with a specially commissioned DVD, founders Maura O'Dea Richards, Annette Evans Hunter and Evelyn Forde celebrated the day with former and current board and staff members, reminiscing about the early days of the organisation and the desperate stigma surrounding single mothers that prompted the founding of an organisation that supported those women who found themselves alone and cast out with their children. Determined that their children should not be considered illegitimate and that they deserved a better future, they built the foundations of an organisation that to this day believes that all families are equal and deserve the opportunities to create bright and hopeful futures for their children. We look forward to continuing to support one-parent families to do just that and to campaign for the human rights of lone parents and their children.

Media

One Family continued to contribute to the national debate on issues affecting one-parent families through continued engagement with national and regional media. Our seminar on Divorce & Children generated

significant media attention with national coverage on the RTE 1 News and in The Irish Times, The Sunday Independent, The Daily Mail, INN and 2FM.

We were particularly pleased to be involved in an RTE Prime Time programme on Government responsibilities in supporting one-parent families in June 2007 and continue to campaign on activation through our media activities.

The launch of our Annual Report 2006 provided an opportunity to raise awareness on the need for Constitutional change that reflects the diversity of family life in Ireland, an issue that we continue to campaign heavily on.

Other noteworthy media activity focused on highlighting issues such as the changes to the Childcare Subvention Scheme, the launch of the survey for One Family's research on lone parents and employment, EU SILC figures on lone parents, the Mr. G case and numerous other issues. We continue to work with one-parent families to ensure their voices are heard in the coverage that affects them and in 2007 several of our clients took part in media activities. We look forward to building on this and empowering lone parents to make their voices heard on issues that concern them.

What's Next

One Family looks forward to continuing to deliver high quality, professional services to one-parent families in 2008. The next year will be busy with the publication of two major pieces of research on **Child & Family Contact Centres** and **Lone Parents & Employment**. We will continue to work with policy makers on these important areas of work and to campaign for the provision of the best supports possible for one-parent families.

One Family has secured funding from FÁS to test the implementation of a comprehensive model of integrated training and support services for lone parents moving from social welfare and into training, education and employment. This model will be fully tested and evaluated, providing a model which could potentially be mainstreamed nationally to support lone parents from welfare to work.

One Family plans to hold significant fundraising activities in 2008, building on successful events such as the Race Night and Table Quiz held in 2007. We will also continue to build our relationships with corporate partners and work with them in developing mutually beneficial opportunities.

Get involved with One Family

- Become a member of can* (One Family's campaigning and advocacy network) by emailing can@onefamily.ie so that you can have your say in issues affecting one-parent families in Ireland
- Check our website www.onefamily.ie for event updates, new parenting features and policy positions
- Support us financially by becoming a regular donor, organise a fundraising event or participate in our ongoing events. More information on www.onefamily.ie or fundraising@onefamily.ie
- Sign up for *One Family Matters* – our biannual newsletter by emailing info@onefamily.ie
- Promote askonefamily* in your workplace through a poster or wallet cards in a stand.
- Use our services or refer someone to us
- We can be contacted on info@onefamily.ie or 1890 66 22 12

Always tell us what you think so we can continue to improve.

We are very grateful to the funders and donors who supported our work in 2007, including:

- Combat Poverty Agency
- Crisis Pregnancy Agency
- Department for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ Equality for Women Measure
- Department of Social and Family Affairs Information Section
- Family Support Agency
- HSE
- Office of the Minister for Children/ National Childcare Investment Plan
- Reception & Integration Agency

Many thanks also to the individuals, private trusts and companies who generously supported One Family throughout the year.

One Family Board of Directors

Chair: Ian Mitchell

Ordinary Members:

- Attracta O'Regan
- Dr. Fergus Ryan
- Karen Fitzpatrick
- Natalie McDonnell
- Nessa McKeivitt
- Rachael Dowling
- Ross Golden-Bannon

Company Secretary: Karen Kiernan

The Board of Directors of One Family seeks to be comprised of a broad and balanced representation including a variety of types and members of one-parent families, a balanced gender composition and wide age range. We work to identify the skills and experience we require according to a predetermined matrix to ensure we have a full complement of all the professional skills required to run the Board of One Family effectively.

One Family's Vision

One Family's vision is that every family in Ireland will be cherished equally, and will enjoy the social, financial and legal equality to create their own positive future.

One Family's Mission

One Family is working to ensure a positive and equal future for all members of all one-parent families in Ireland – changing attitudes, services, policies and lives. Together with one-parent families and those working with them, we are committed to achieving equality and respect for all families.

In addition to striving for fundamental structural change, we support individual one-parent families as they parent through times of family, work and life change, and those experiencing a crisis pregnancy. We know that every family is unique, and so we work in a family centred way to bring about better lives for parents and children.

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If you would like to make a donation to One Family you can do so at Bank of Ireland

Account No: 17 19 19 23 Sort Code: 90-00-17

