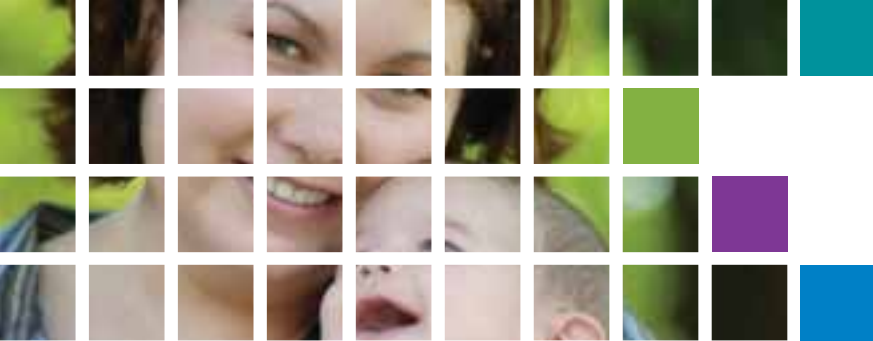


One Family's **Annual Report** 2005





Chair's statement

Year Ended 31 December 2005



In 2005, One Family continued to consolidate its position as a leading provider of support and services to all members of one-parent families in Ireland. Building on a legacy that stretches

back over 30 years, One Family works to achieve positive change for all members of one-parent families, in particular, through campaigning and the provision of support and services.

With one in eight people in Ireland now living in a one-parent family, it is clear that the time has come to recognise one-parent families as a valid family form. This year we made key submissions to the All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, calling for all families to be deemed equal in law under the Constitution. It is a point of considerable concern that in a country that prides itself on its child and family friendly attitude, one in six families still struggle to be legally acknowledged as just that – a family. We will continue to work for a society in which one-parent families are valued equally.

The range of services that we provide continues to attract a growing number of clients from a diversity of backgrounds. Indeed, 2005 saw nearly a 20 per cent increase in the number of one-parent families and professionals accessing our services, as well as further growth in the diversity of families to whom we provide support and services.

With these increases in mind, in 2005 we have continued to invest in our organisational capacity by creating new roles in Policy & Campaigns, and Communications. This will ensure that we can continue creating positive change for the one-parent families with whom we work and for all one-parent families in Ireland.

2005 was the mid-year of our Strategic Plan 2004–2006. Many of the objectives set out in the plan have been achieved. 2006 will see us working hard on our next strategic plan, which will position One Family as a leading family organisation in Ireland.

I would like to thank our supporters, funders, friends and all the one-parent families we have worked with during the year. I particularly appreciate the professionalism and dedication of our staff members who continue to work hard to achieve the goals of the organisation. I hope as always that you will continue to share our purpose to affect positive change and achieve equality and social inclusion for all one-parent families in Ireland.

Dr Fergus Ryan
Chair, One Family

Director's foreword



2005 saw the continuing growth in the number of one-parent families accessing One Family's services and supports. This growth brought with it many challenges for us as an

organisation. With your support we rose to the challenge and began by seeking to further broaden our understanding of the wonderful diversity of one-parent families and their very different needs. This year we have truly worked with all different kinds of one-parent families, separated, divorced, single and widowed parents, families of many different nationalities, those parenting alone and those sharing parenting.

askonefamily, the National Helpline for all One-Parent Families continued to go from strength to strength and, in December, we ran our first dedicated Christmas Helpline to ensure that we were there with support, information and a listening ear for those families experiencing breakup and separation at such a difficult time of year. We also expanded the service to include email support.

Demand for our Counselling Service continues to grow. In addition to providing crisis pregnancy, post abortion and general counselling in 2005, we also delivered crisis pregnancy training to a number of organisations at their request. We will be continuing this aspect of the Counselling Service in 2006.

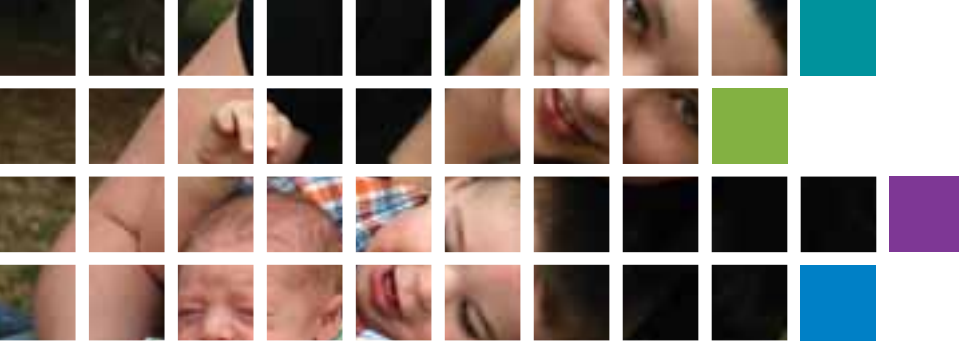
In continuing our support for those working with one-parent families we ran a number of one-day Issues to Consider courses. This course is a vital way in which we can ensure that an understanding of one-parent families forms not only the bedrock of our own work, but of the work of all professionals and services working with them.

Our Creating Future Policy seminar in May was a first step to increasing our knowledge and understanding of the needs of one-parent families from new communities, who now account for roughly 50 per cent of our direct services work. The fantastic response from participants highlighted the lack of fora for those working with families to share learning of what works. We look forward to publishing key recommendations from the conference in 2006 to further spread the learning.

We also made a number of key submissions during the year, including our Pre-Budget Submission. This contributed to a new focus by Government on the important issue of childcare.

I would like to thank our dedicated staff team and the Board of Directors, who so generously give their time. A special thank you to Karen Griffin, who stepped down as Chair. Karen has served the organisation and its clients with dedication, enthusiasm and drive for a number of years. Finally, I would like to welcome Dr Fergus Ryan, who became our new Chair during 2005. We look forward to a 2006 that will see us continue to actively innovate and change.

Karen Kiernan
Director, One Family



Understanding families

One Family exists to provide support to and bring about change for all members of all one-parent families in Ireland. In order to support one-parent families it is important to understand that they, like other families, come in all shapes and sizes, with different experiences and needs.

- 1 in 8 people in Ireland now live in a one-parent family.
- 24 per cent of all one-parent families in 2002 were headed by a single parent, 40 per cent by widowed persons and 32 per cent by separated or divorced persons.
- 85 per cent of one-parent families are headed by a woman.

In 2005, the work of One Family continued to be led by the needs of one-parent families. As the make up and needs of one-parent families change, so too do the services and supports that we provide.

There are many families around the country that we know cannot access our direct services and so a continuing and important part of our work in 2005 was to promote an understanding of the diversity, strengths and needs of one-parent families to those working with them around the country.

Issues to Consider

Issues to Consider is a course which looks at the particular needs facing one-parent families. It is designed to give those working with one-parent families an in-depth understanding of the diversity of family life in Ireland and the barriers facing one-parent families in accessing services.

Over 50 per cent of the families who accessed our direct services in 2005 were from new communities. As a relatively new and very internally diverse group of families, we set out to discover what we could learn about the needs, strengths and realities of life for one-parent families from new communities living in Ireland.

Case Study – Catriona Nally

I am 26, and an unmarried stay-at-home mum of two young kids. I was raised in a two-parent family home and believed that this was a 'family'. So when I spilt up with my partner when I was pregnant I was confused and felt isolated. It took me a while and courage to find One Family but since I did, it has changed my attitude in a lot of ways.

I started to use the counselling service, which I've found amazing. Through this I found out about other services on offer. I signed up for the Going Solo support group.

I was apprehensive getting involved in a group because I wasn't sure what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised to find people in the same situation as me from all walks of life. In this group I came to understand that families come in all shapes and sizes and have their strengths and weaknesses. Most of all they are all families.

Currently, I'm involved in the Positive Parenting group. We get to choose the topics we want more information and discussions on. These courses

are tailored to meet the needs of each group. Obviously managing children's behaviour will always be covered.

These groups have been beneficial to me in everyday life. I've learned the cooperation needed within groups to make them successful and how to listen!

While attending One Family, my children are cared for in the crèche. The Childcare Coordinator has helped me to explain a recent bereavement to my four-year-old girl. This advice was most helpful, as I didn't have any information on the subject.

Finally, I would like to add that every time I go to One Family a person with a smile always opens the door. Each day I'm there I feel better about myself, my family and that there is light at the end of the tunnel.



Sharing Understanding and Creating Future Policy

In May, we held our first conference looking at the needs of one-parent families from new communities in conjunction with the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. The goal of the conference was not only for One Family to learn, but also for all of us working with families from new communities in different areas to share our experiences of what works and what needs to change.

Using innovative Open Space technology, the conference provided a chance for all to participate, share knowledge and learn. The agenda was set by the participants and this created an atmosphere of ownership by all.

'Everyone had the same opportunity to contribute and to raise issues. The open agenda was very helpful.'

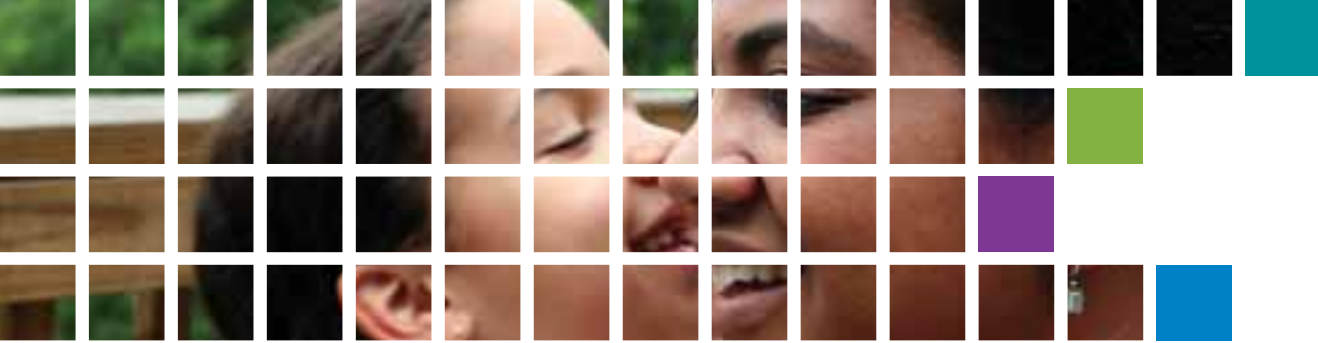
The conference had three main goals:

- to share knowledge and experience of working with families from new communities across sectors;

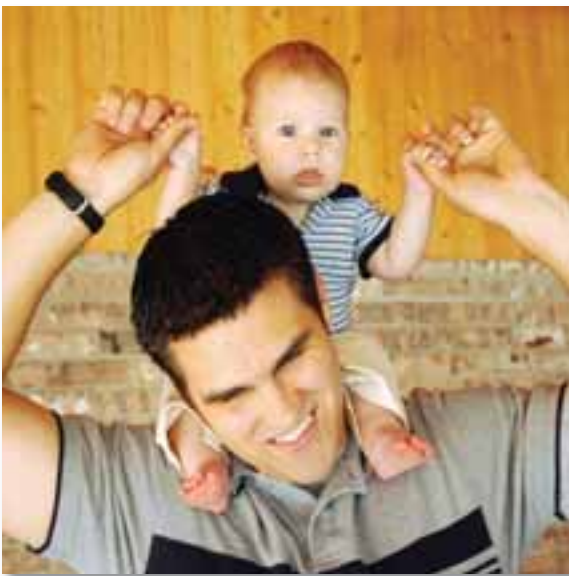
- to stimulate thinking and debate about what needs to change; and
- to draw up a list of key recommendations that would be distributed to key policy-makers and the voluntary and public sector to ensure that the learning from the conference would continue.

In 2006, we look forward to more opportunities to expand our learning and understanding. The recommendations from the conference will be published in 2006.





Supporting families



Our practical support services continued to play a key role in our work in 2005. A key priority was to find new ways to reach and support the ever more diverse group of families accessing our services. Our services for families are supported by an inhouse childcare facility which provides not only care for the child while the parent is accessing services and support, but also works with the family on parenting and child development.

In an exciting new development we secured funding to create a Family Communication course. A project group was assembled and we quickly got to work to plan the course which will be piloted throughout 2006 with inhouse clients.

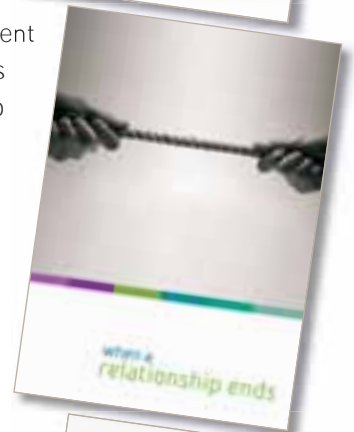
The idea for a Family Communication course came about as a result of hearing one-parent families express the difficulties of maintaining positive communication within the family at times of great

stress, such as separation, divorce and contact problems. The course is designed to provide families with the tools and a safe environment in which to practice the techniques of using positive communication to work through family difficulties.

With growing numbers of clients with very different needs, we also sought to diversify the ways in which we provided support and information. Two central developments to this work were the development of a series of information booklets for one-parent families and the redevelopment and relaunch of our website, www.onefamily.ie.

As the biggest hurdle for many one-parent families is finding the right information at the time you need it most, we secured funding from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency to produce a series of information and support leaflets. To date, six leaflets have been completed:

- *What is Counselling?;*
- *Having a Baby;*
- *When a Relationship Ends;*
- *Returning to Education;*
- *Getting into Employment;* and
- *Becoming a Parent.*



These innovative leaflets differ from other information in that they are written to provide both practical information and support to one-parent families. The leaflets are crucial to our work in that they allow us to provide information that clients can take away and look at when they are ready to take in the information, and they also allow us to provide information and support to one-parent families around the county who can ring or email for copies. The leaflets are provided free of charge and also form part of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, Positive Options II Campaign. This means that they are not only used by One Family to support one-parent families, but they are also distributed free by the 12 agencies funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency to provide Crisis Pregnancy Services.

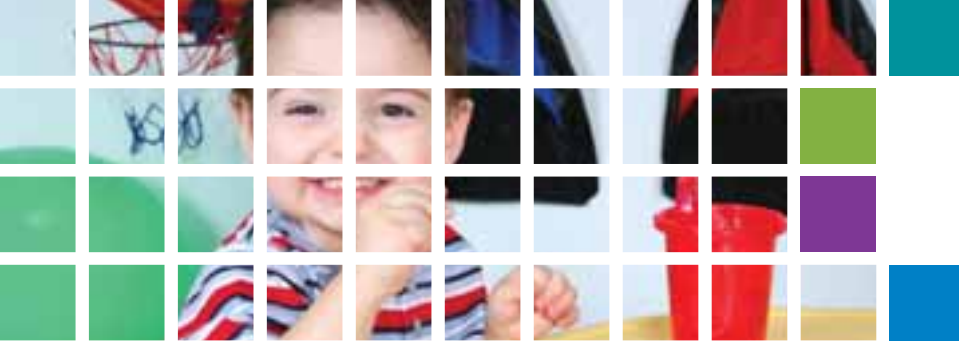
A further two leaflets: *Childcare: Finding What Works for Both You and Your Child*; and *What is Crisis Pregnancy Counselling?* will be available in 2006.

Getting online... www.onefamily.ie

After many months of work we were delighted to launch our new and improved website in the autumn. The new site has been designed to be accessible, friendly, and a place where one-parent families and those working with them can find positive information and support. The site is now set up so that everyone can quickly access the information they are looking for. All information for one-parent families can be found under a new section called *Our Services for Families*, and we have a brand new *Parents' Corner* with lots of tips and information.

We are also working to build up the site as an information resource on issues relevant to one-parent families for policy-makers, professionals working with one-parent families and the media.





Supporting families (continued)



askonefamily is a unique national helpline for one-parent families. Families call the helpline for many different reasons. For some, it is a chance to get practical information, for others, an understanding and listening ear can mean the difference between feeling supported and completely isolated. The helpline is strictly confidential and provides a chance for callers to talk about difficult family issues. We also provide a call-back service to give ongoing support to callers who need it.

Case Study – James

Hi, I just came across your website while browsing and was wondering could you send me some info about your organisation. I am just in the middle of separating from my partner and we have a lovely 4-year-old little girl. I want to make sure that I am still involved in her life after the separation and am afraid that I won't be able to see her as much as I would like. My ex and I are really not getting on at all at the moment.

Can you give me some advice on how we can come to an agreement so that we can share the parenting of our daughter?

I live in Mayo and would be interested in finding out if there is any support I can get locally.

Any help would be great. Thanks, James

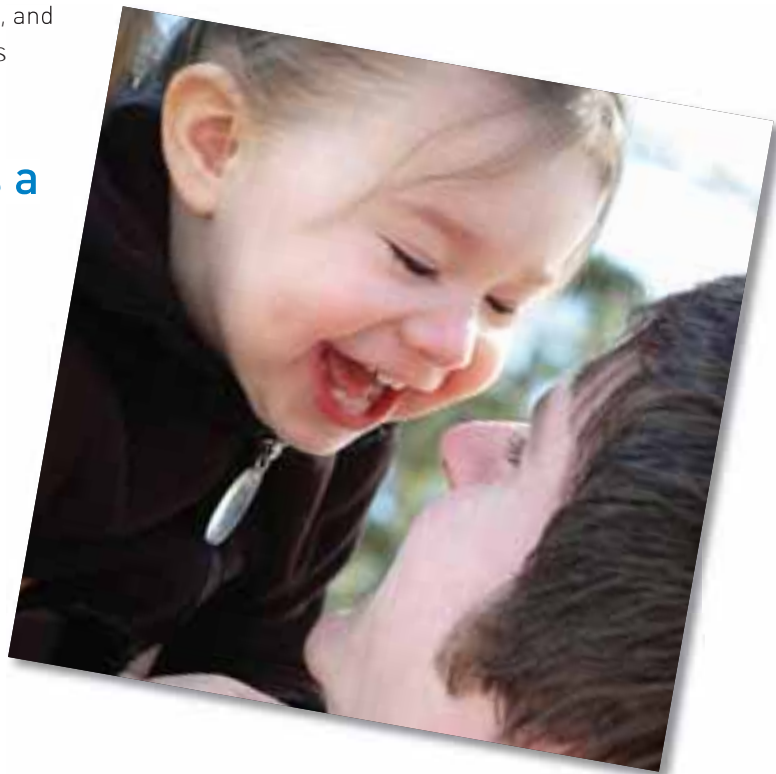
How did we help James?

- We acknowledged how James was feeling at the moment and his concerns.
- We explored ways of improving communication and the importance of both parents staying focused on the best interests of their daughter.
- We sourced support groups and organisations for James in Mayo, including his nearest Family Resource Centre and a support group for solo parents.
- We explained a little about counselling and gave James the contact details of counselling services in Mayo.
- We sent James the *What is Counselling?* and *When a Relationship Ends* leaflets.
- We explained Family Mediation to James and told him about the Family Mediation Service, and the Free Legal Advice centres and Legal Aid Board, should he ever need legal information.
- James was invited to call the helpline service at any stage or email support@onefamily.ie again just to talk things through a little.
- We encouraged James to think about his own support network and taking care of himself during this stressful time.

In 2005, there was a steady increase in the numbers accessing the helpline. Yet, we know this is still only the tip of the iceberg. In order to help more families we introduced a new email support service, support@onefamily.ie, where people can email in their queries. This allows us to reach families who may struggle with finding the time or space to attend drop-in information sessions or to ring the helpline during working hours. The email support service has proved very successful, and we have seen a steady increase in numbers accessing [askonefamily](#) in this way.

Christmas: not always a time of cheer

For the first time we launched a special Christmas Helpline. While for many Christmas time is an enjoyable time to spend with family, for others it can be a nightmare of relationship breakdown and problems over contact with children. We wanted to make sure that we were there for the one-parent families all over Ireland who would struggle during this time. The Helpline ran between Christmas and New Years Day, and provided a vital source of information and support for the families who called.



In 2006, we will continue to look at how we can bring the [askonefamily](#) service to the many one-parent families who still struggle with isolation and a lack of vital, practical information.

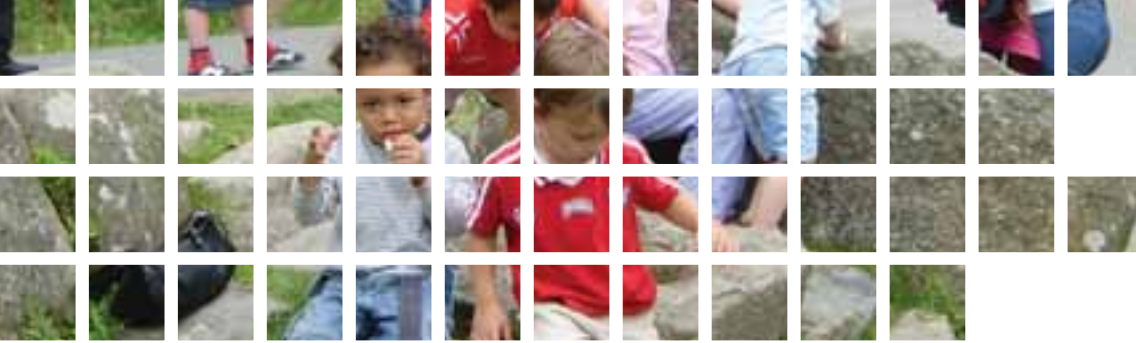
Sharing experiences and learning

As part of our ongoing journey to understand and share information and learning on the very diverse needs of one-parent families, we also wanted to see how we could develop our services to help professionals address the key obstacles that they faced in their work with one-parent families.

So, in June, we invited a range of professionals providing services to one-parent families to take part in an organisational needs analysis during which we asked them to reflect on the challenges they were facing in their work. The research process involved six regional focus groups, which were held in Limerick, Sligo, Cork, Dublin, Edenderry and Waterford. We also ensured that the groups were made up of different types of workers. This gave us a chance to get a broad picture of need, and also gave participants a chance to network locally and to share success stories.

The 58 workers who took part in the needs analysis did have a number of challenges in common such as social policy issues, staying current with information, childcare, personal development for parents and parenting issues.

One of the ways we are hoping to address such issues for professionals is by providing them with services and products that will allow them to help families to deal with these difficult issues. Our Positive Parenting work is a prime example of how we are looking to support families and professionals working with them.



Supporting families and those working with them

Positive Parenting

Issues with parenting come up again and again with the one-parent families that we work with. As our needs analysis from the previous page shows, it is also a key issue for the professionals across the country who work with them.


We have been running an inhouse Positive Parenting course for parents for some years.

'Positive Parenting has really helped me to see things in a different way. The new skills I have learned mean we are all happier as a family.'

Case Study – Adaku Ezeudo

I am originally from Nigeria but have lived in Ireland with my three girls for five years. Being a single parent, raising three children was really demanding for me and soon became boring. I decided to get my life back on track so I began to explore my educational or training options for solo parents. I rang a number of one-parent family support organisations and enquired about what they had to offer. I soon realised that One Family was ideal for me. I quickly registered for courses on Computers for Improvers, Positive Parenting and Women's Health.

Since I started my courses with One Family, I have improved a lot in my parenting skills,



computer skills and even learnt how to overcome the challenges of being a solo parent. I have learnt to be the 'good enough' parent, to actively listen to my kids and to be assertive. I now realise what 'quality time' with your children means. I also understand their different emotions and give as much positive attention as possible. I've learnt to manage stress and to nurture myself. My self-esteem is gradually returning from its long journey. I'm a more confident person and I now see the sky as my limit.

From working with parents on these courses we have built up a wealth of knowledge and experience on parenting issues. So, we decided that it was time to share this experience and learning with other professionals working with families. In April 2005, our Training & Consultancy Service piloted a new programme, *Positive Parenting: Training for Trainers*, aimed at preparing workers to design and deliver innovative parenting courses, which note the particular challenges faced by parenting in a one-parent family. We are really excited about being able to deliver a course that can benefit so many families. The course runs over a three-day period and covers a range of key themes and concepts such as:

- the 'Good Enough Parent';
- approaches to managing difficult behaviour;
- assertive parenting;

- dealing with family change; and
- child centredness.

Throughout the course participants are encouraged to consider how they would use the tools and materials covered to deliver parenting courses with their own clients.

The course is based on the One Family manual, *Positive Parenting: Building Strong Relationships with Your Children and Managing Difficult Behaviour*. The pilot programme delivered in April was very well received and the training course continues to be in high demand.

How the right training can change your work

The Positive Parenting training was really useful as it allows us to choose from different issues and to focus on a specific area. This is especially beneficial when doing a one-to-one session, where personal circumstances can differ widely from client to client.

It has enabled us to encourage our many young parents to be assertive in dealing with their children, particularly in relation to discipline, and also the importance and power of being consistent when parenting. We have found that by helping parents understand that they cannot meet every need and demand that their child has but that all they need is to be a 'good-

enough parent' – the pressure they felt was removed.

Differentiating between discipline and punishment, and the strategies involved is extremely beneficial for parents. Assisting parents in developing an understanding of what causes tantrums, what to do and learning ways to reduce tantrums has also proven to be very useful.

Overall, the training has proved invaluable as we can see how positive the results are for our young parents – which, in turn, is hugely beneficial for their children and their entire family.

We have found that the Positive Parenting training has enabled us to encourage, support and assist many young parents in becoming confident in their own ability to parent, to empower them with the information and skills necessary to help raise children who will be happy, confident and have good self-esteem.'

Teen Parent Support Programme, Galway



Moving On To ... Education, Training and Employment Opportunities

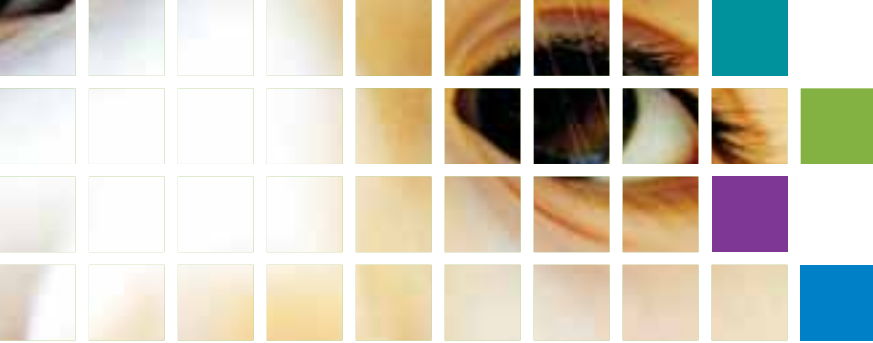
...is an exciting new project that emerged from the ongoing need for statutory and community/voluntary sector organisations to form innovative partnerships in order to create more effective ways of supporting solo parents in accessing the labour market.

The project operates on a partnership basis with the Local Employment Service Network (LESN), initially on a pilot basis in six locations nationwide.

The project aims to bring together the complementary expertise of One Family and the LESN to provide a more holistic support service to female solo parents as they work to move back in to education, training or employment.

One Family is working in partnership with participating LES, female solo parents and employers to develop a stepped model that will truly enable these parents to move on to new opportunities. The programme will then be mainstreamed nationally.

This innovative programme is funded under the Equality for Women Measure. This is a positive action programme for women, led by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and funded through the National Development Plan 2000–06. It is designed to promote pilot initiatives aimed at improving the economic, social, cultural and political lives of women.



Giving voice to families

Bringing about change for one-parent families is the second cornerstone of One Family's work. We work hard to ensure that our voice accurately represents the voices of the 153,000 one-parent families in Ireland.

2005 was a busy year of significant change in our policy work. We completed two key position papers and submitted them to Government:

- *Working for a Constitution that Affords Equal Rights to All Families.*
- *Recognising the Realities of the Diversity of Family Life in Ireland.*

These papers represent two crucial tenets on which we base our work: all families must be equal and that the diversity of families needs to be acknowledged and supported.



Working Towards Equality for All Families

One Family made a submission in June 2005 in response to a call for submissions to a Government review of policies to assist those parenting alone. The submission looked at a number of options around financial supports, access to education, training and employment, access to affordable, quality childcare and

Working for a Constitution that Affords Equal Rights to All Families and Recognising the Diversity of Family Life

In April our Director, Karen Kiernan, made a presentation to the All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution. Having taken our original name, Cherish, from the 1916 Declaration, which states that Ireland will 'cherish all of the children of the nation equally', One Family believes that the Constitution should place children first. Our presentation to the

Committee strongly argued that in order to do so, the privileged position of the marital family needs to be replaced by a recognition in the Constitution of all types of families. The rights of the child, regardless of their family situation, need to be increased, and Irish law needs to be brought into line with the European Convention on Human Rights.

While constitutional change alone will not achieve full equality for one-parent families, it is needed to supply the foundations for legal and social policies based on family diversity and the inherent worth of all families in Ireland today.

comprehensive supports and services that recognise the realities of life in one-parent families. Our submission stressed the need for a thorough review of a number of financial support options in order to prevent further poverty among one-parent families. Current income supports for one-parent families are inadequate, conditional and inflexible. The submission looked at the low participation rates of solo parents in employment which reflects not only the interaction between earned and benefit income, but also the inflexibility of working arrangements, and the lack of availability of part-time and flexible employment which will provide sufficient income to offset high childcare costs and loss of benefits.

Our submission stressed that in order to strike a balance between work and other areas of life, including family life, a shift is required in how we envisage the workplace and the role of workers within it. We need to move towards more flexible work patterns and a less static definition of the workplace. The lack of flexible and affordable childcare suited to the needs of one-parent families means that many solo parents, particularly those with younger children, cannot access vital supports and services, or take advantage of education and employment opportunities. One Family, among other recommendations, proposed that all employment, education and training supports for parents be delivered with elements of social and emotional support programmes, and that a training programme for all front-line staff in each of the state agencies currently providing services for one-parent families be provided on the range of supports available.

In 2005, poverty continued to be a key policy issue, as one-parent families were three times more likely to live in poverty than other families (EU SILC). We received funding from the Combat Poverty Agency to produce a booklet for our members on a human rights-based approach to anti-poverty work for one-parent families. This booklet will be launched in late 2006.

Making connections

A crucial part of pursuing our policy and campaigning objectives is making links with key organisations. We are on the boards of the EAPN and the INOU. We are also involved in a number of other networks, including the Family Diversity Initiative and a network of one-parent family organisations.

Key Policy Submissions

APOCC – Constitution

February 2005

DSFA on review of Government Policies to Support those Parenting Alone

June 2005

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

October 2005

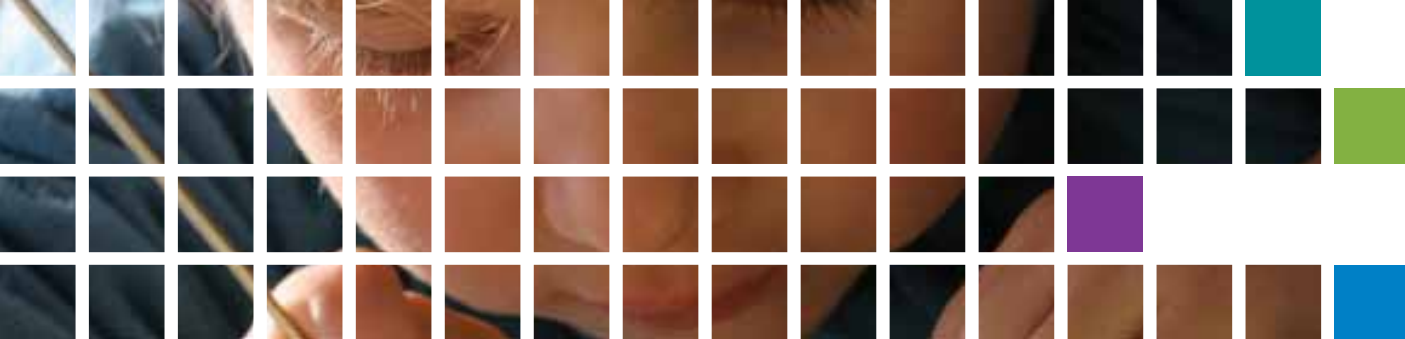
Pre-Budget Submission

October 2005

Shadow Report on the Rights of the Child

November 2005





Celebrating families

Families are the spaces in which we grow and live our lives and it is important to celebrate family life. At One Family we always remember to take the time to celebrate the happy, productive and diverse one-parent families with whom we work.

During 2005 we celebrated one-parent families in a number of different ways.

Graduation – a day to celebrate

Each summer we hold a graduation for all those who have completed courses with us during the year. The graduation is an important day for clients and allows them to celebrate all that they have achieved. For many, it may mark a return to education after a long absence, while for others, it may mark the start of a new life of empowerment. For One Family the day is a great chance for us to be reminded of how important our work is, and how the right support can make all the difference to empowering families to change their lives for the better. Kitty Holland, *Irish Times* journalist, gave an inspiring and thought provoking speech on the day, and the event was enjoyed by all.

'I liked the ability to speak my mind and someone listened. Realising my inbuilt abilities and things I can develop. Love the discussions so much!'

'I learned a lot of information about where I can go for courses and employment. I feel stronger in myself to do this now.'

'In Computers [the facilitator] was easy to get on with and helped all the different levels. Great at giving one-to-one attention when needed.'

'In the Social Group I got the the chance to relax, enjoy and socialise, chat and make new friends. It's something I don't get to do without my child and I truly enjoy the pleasure.'





Annual Holiday and Summer Programme

Every summer we take 15 families on an annual weekend away. For many, this is the only chance of a break during the year. The holiday is a great way for families to get to know other families in similar situations, to relax and to have fun. In 2005, the holiday went to Clare and much fun was had by all.

In addition to the holiday we run a Summer Programme, which involves a series of daytrips during July and August. In 2005, we made trips to Glendalough, the Zoo, a farm and many other fun places. Each week a child and family friendly venue was chosen and the parents were able to relax and enjoy the day as their children revelled in the new experiences. Again, the days out are one of the many interlinked ways in which we work to give families the opportunity to build on their support networks.

In 2006, we look forward to celebrating one-parent families in all their shapes and sizes, and to working with them to ensure that One Family continues to accurately represent and support them.



One Family's services include:

- **askonefamily** – The National Helpline providing information and support for all one-parent families.
- Information and support via email from **support@onefamily.ie**
- **Practical skill and personal development courses** for members of one-parent families.
- **Crisis Pregnancy Counselling** on all options and counselling for adults and young people in one-parent families.
- Training Service for those working with one-parent families.
- All services are free to any member of a one-parent family, and are supported by an on-site childcare facility.

Thanks to the organisations who have helped us to continue to develop our work during 2005, including:

- Combat Poverty Agency
- Crisis Pregnancy Agency
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Dublin City Council
- Family Support Agency
- HSE East Coast Area
- HSE Northern Area
- Reception & Integration Agency
- Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
- The Community Foundation for Ireland

Thanks also to the private trusts, corporate sponsors and private individuals who were supportive of our work during 2005.

One Family board of directors

- Chair: Dr Fergus Ryan
- Vice-Chair: Elaine Bradley
- Treasurer: Ian Mitchell

Ordinary Members:

- Natalie McDonnell
- Nessa McKeivitt
- Rachel Amavi Hiheglo
- Karen Fitzpatrick
- Robert Forde*
- Karen Griffin
- Company Secretary: Karen Kiernan

**Robert Forde resigned in late 2005.*

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. Currently, 70 per cent of our Board members have experience of being part of a one-parent family.

Progressing the work of Cherish, established in 1972, ONE FAMILY provides voice, support and action for one-parent families through membership, professional services and campaigning. Our aim is to affect positive change and achieve equality and social inclusion for all one-parent families in Ireland.

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Fax: 01 662 9096

askonefamily: Lo-Call 1890 66 22 12

Email: info@onefamily.ie

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