

One Family | Annual Report 2006





Chair's statement

Year Ended 31 December 2006



In 2006 we completed our Strategic Plan 2004-2006, affording us an opportunity to look back on an amazing three years of achievements. These achievements included the significant expansion of our client

group, rebranding to One Family from Cherish and securing new premises for our continued growth of services for one-parent families. We also began the important and time-consuming work of developing our next strategy which will be launched in 2007.

The linkages between our frontline services work and our policy work proved particularly relevant this year as the Government published its proposed reforms of state supports for one-parent families (Review of State Supports for Lone Parents, 2006). One Family provided a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to the government's proposals based on widespread consultation with our **can***¹ members, our clients, staff and with our NGO colleagues.

Based on this submission we had a series of meetings with the Department of Social & Family Affairs which we hope will result in positive changes to the proposals. The One Family Services team also responded by beginning to plan for the impact of these proposals on our clients and for the services and supports they require from us. This Practice to Policy/Policy to Practice model ensures that we are accurate, relevant and responsive to both the needs of our individual clients and our **can*** members around Ireland as well as to a changing policy environment.

In addition to responding to proposed changes in Government policy, One Family published a major policy paper on *Quality of Life for One-Parent Families* in 2006. We believe this publication will help to frame the debate on policy towards families in a wide variety of areas including anti-poverty policy, family support services and children's rights. A further significant achievement this year was the publication of the One Family booklet on Human Rights, which outlines how human rights can be used to advance the rights of one-parent families in Ireland. The booklet has received a very positive response from our members as well as from other voluntary sector organisations working in this area. Our heartfelt thanks go, in particular, to former President Mary Robinson and to the Irish Human Rights Commission for their contribution to and endorsement of the booklet.

I would like to thank our supporters, funders, friends and all the one-parent families we have worked with during the year who have made all these achievements possible. I particularly appreciate the professionalism and dedication of our staff and Board members who continue to work hard to achieve the mission and vision of the organisation. 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 to create their own positive future.

Dr. Fergus Ryan
Chair, One Family

¹**can*** is One Family's Campaigning & Advocacy Network

Director's foreword



Although 2006 was important for One Family in terms of reviewing and developing strategy, we were of course also kept busy with the ongoing delivery of services to one-parent families across Ireland. In 2006

we saw an amazing additional 10% increase in direct client contacts over 2005 which means that we worked with nearly 6500 members of one-parent families and professionals. This reflects the fact that there is a huge ongoing demand for our services and that One Family continues to be the leading provider of specialist family support services for one-parent families in Ireland.

We are able to achieve this leadership position through our unique organisational model where we leverage the innovative learning we gain from working with diverse and marginalised one-parent families in Dublin into training and policy products that we roll out around Ireland to other professional service providers. This very cost-effective model means that we are ideally positioned to be a source of support, information and expertise for members of one-parent families, professionals and policy makers alike.

One of our other national services [askonefamily*](#) has been busier than ever, allowing us to offer practical advice, information and support to people from all over Ireland and increasingly further afield by phone and email.

Other service highlights of 2006 include the launch of our extremely popular Parent Mentoring service, the piloting of our Family Communications and Family Wellness programmes as well as the introduction of Solution-Focused Counselling.

The brand recognition of One Family continues to increase through the strategic development and re-launch of our website and the production of key materials, such as promotion materials for [askonefamily*](#). We also continue to be sought by national, regional and local media with over 100 appearances throughout 2006 across print media, radio and television.

As always it is a pleasure to reflect on our achievements and to thank all the thousands of one-parent families who have trusted us to support them and from whom we learn everything we know.

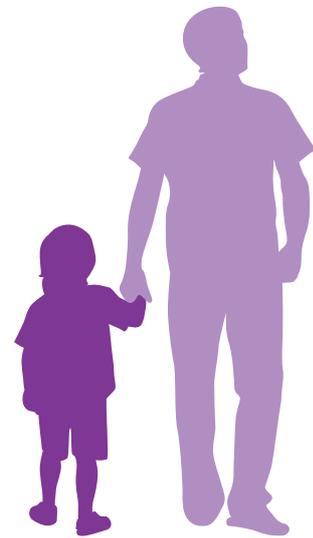
We look forward to continuing our positive relationships and collaborations with all our partners across the statutory, voluntary and public sectors in 2007 and beyond.

Karen Kiernan

Director, One Family

One Family Parenting

Building strong families



The One Family Parenting services continued to deliver a range of invaluable services to one-parent families in 2006. Particularly exciting for the Parenting team were the development of the Parent Mentoring service and the ongoing delivery of parenting-skills courses, such as Positive Parenting, Family Communications and Family Wellness. The team continues to work closely with parents and families to understand their unique needs and to respond to those needs in the services we provide.

The crèche has become an informal environment for parents to seek advice and support on all aspects of parenting and to befriend others who are in a similar position, leading to lasting and mutually supportive ties outside the building.

“*My relationship with my child is better; we are closer, bonding better and I understanding more about how children think*”

One Family Crèche Client, 2006

Childcare

The Childcare service is the hallmark of One Family's practical and thoughtful approach to supporting its clients. Without this integral part of the organisation, parents would not be able to access One Family Futures, One Family Supports or One Family Information services. We constantly evaluate the needs of our clients to make sure that we offer quality childcare that respects each child's individual needs. We aim to extend the child's learning experience through play and to work with parents to support them in their role as lone parents or in shared-parenting situations.

At the hub of the work of the Childcare service is the on-site crèche which is a well-planned and stimulating environment, with distinctive work areas and an outdoor space.



Parent Mentoring

The Childcare Coordinator and her team developed a Parent Mentoring service in 2006. This service offers professional support to individual parents in parenting skills and it has been particularly successful for fathers, both those with primary care of their children as well as those who are seeking access for the first time. The Parent Mentoring service was also availed of by a number of participants of our Positive Parenting courses, who felt they required extra support.

The Parent Mentoring service helps parents build confidence and self-esteem, which is an essential basis for improvement in their own lives and those of their children. One Family has long understood how the low self-esteem often experienced by lone parents can affect a person's ability to cope with issues such as family conflict and communication. Those who used the Parent Mentoring service this year felt that the extra support they received allowed them to make meaningful changes in their family relationships, leading to a more effective and harmonious family life.



Positive Parenting

The One Family Parenting service continued to offer courses on key aspects of parenting and family life throughout 2006. The Positive Parenting course teaches parents different ways of managing their children's behaviour and how to deal with conflict situations in ways that produce a positive outcome for the whole family. The aim of the course is to build parents' confidence and self-esteem in their ability to parent effectively.

“I liked the interaction of everyone's opinion, the open discussions, learning different ways of parenting and most of all, learning that I am a “good-enough” parent.”

Participant, Positive Parenting Course, 2006

The excellent response to and the ongoing popularity of the Positive Parenting courses has proven the continuing need for developing and expanding on this work.

Family Communications

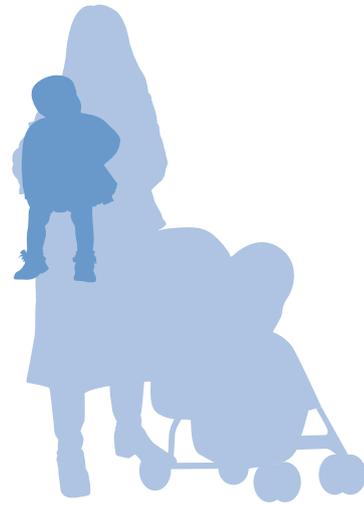
The One Family Parenting team, with support from the HSE, piloted the **Coping with Family Life: Family Communication** course in 2006. The programme aims to improve a family's ability to communicate clearly and directly with each other through developing an understanding of how to use a non-combative communication process in a variety of family situations.

Due to the positive evaluation of this pilot, One Family will be developing training products for other professionals based on this course in 2007.

The team also piloted a **Family Wellness** course as a follow-up to the Family Communications course which also proved to be very successful at meeting the real needs of families.

One Family Futures

Progressing to education,
training or employment



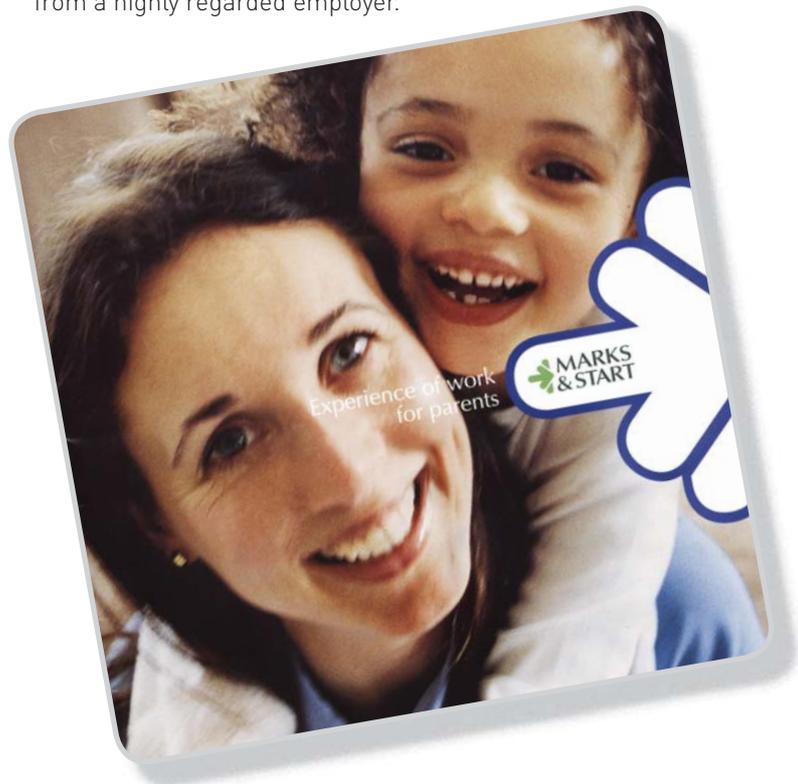
Building on the solid personal, family and parenting work undertaken by One Family Parenting, the One Family Futures service provides adult pre-vocational education and life skills training to members of one-parent families. One Family Futures aims to empower clients to create their own future by providing them with the tools to move forward into education and employment. This is a vital service, giving lone parents the opportunities to create better lives for themselves and their families.

The One Family Futures service enables parents to:

- Develop a new set of skills which offers them the choice of returning to employment
- Develop a range of strategies that can support the family through the enhancement of practical skills and personal or professional development
- Build self-confidence and self-esteem, giving people a belief in their abilities
- Find mutual support among their programme groups and with other service clients.

Marks & Start

2006 also saw the continuation of our collaboration with Marks & Spencer on the Marks & Start Programme. The Marks & Start Programme for parents returning to work comprises a three-and-a-half day training programme followed by a two-week work placement in participating Marks & Spencer's stores. This provides parents with the opportunity to apply practical training in a real working environment. 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. It also gives jobseekers a reference from a highly regarded employer.



Guidance Sessions

Guidance Sessions were developed by the Adult Education Manager to further support parents undertaking education or employment development. These sessions provide one-to-one support for parents, providing information and support on all training and job related issues. The service aims to guide each individual client through opportunities in education and employment that are available to them, strategies for developing a chosen career and information on supports that can help them in attaining their goals. The Guidance Sessions are immensely helpful to clients, complementing their training in other aspects of the One Family Futures programme.

As with all our services, we continue to work with our partners to ensure that clients are referred and signposted where appropriate to other specialist services and that we do not duplicate any existing services.

Computer Training

2006 saw a number of achievements in One Family Futures. Our Computer Skills courses became recognised by FETAC, which now allows us to award FETAC accreditation to all those who complete courses with us. This is obviously a huge step for the service and for clients undertaking it; giving clients a recognised qualification in a highly employable skill set.





One Family Futures

(continued)

Graduation 2006

Graduation is held every year to celebrate the achievements of one-parent families who have completed courses with the One Family Parenting and One Family Futures services. The Graduation gives families and staff an opportunity to reflect on all they have accomplished together.

This year, the event was held in Dublin Castle. The ceremony included a keynote speech by bestselling author and former lone parent Sarah Webb, who highlighted the achievements of the graduates. She also encouraged them to look ahead to goals that might have seemed out of reach to them before they completed their courses but that they now have the confidence and skills to pursue.





askonefamily*

Providing information to One-Parent Families



Throughout 2006, our askonefamily* Information service continued to provide advice, information and practical help to one-parent families all across Ireland through a range of media.

askonefamily* offers emotional support, guidance and information to one-parent families and professional support to people working with them through:

- our National Lo-Call Helpline **1890 66 22 12**
- our email support service, **support@onefamily.ie**
- our information rich website, **www.onefamily.ie**
- the publication of a range of information and support leaflets.

We maintain up-to-date information on the rights and entitlements of families including, but not limited to, social welfare, legal issues, housing, employment, education and healthcare. The service is guided by core principles of unconditional respect for all users, confidentiality and non-directive support.

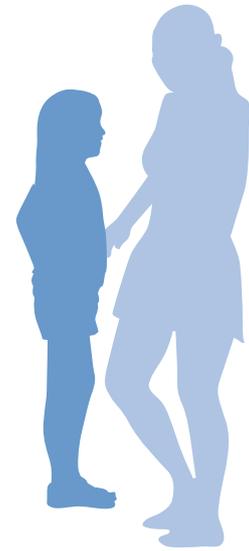
Our email support service experienced immense popularity in 2006 with a 70% increase in the uptake of the service from 2005. The askonefamily* team also expanded the successful Christmas Helpline campaign, providing 64 hours of telephone based support between the 1 to the 22 December with additional hours during Christmas week. Postcards

were also produced and disseminated providing advice on dealing with difficult Christmas situations, such as spending Christmas alone and dealing with family conflict.

The Information Support team also produced a new leaflet, **Children Can Handle It** for parents dealing with changes in their family circumstance or difficult periods around separation and divorce. This leaflet provides a useful guide helping parents talk openly with their children about difficult issues and is available on our website.

askonefamily* continues to expand and develop as a key service for one-parent families and professionals who work with them right across Ireland.





One Family Supports

Sharing through difficult times

The One Family Support service provides vital emotional and social support to one-parent families as part of a holistic range of services. Our Counselling service offers a variety of services depending on people's needs. The One Family Supports team also provides opportunities for clients to build social networks and decrease social isolation through our annual Summer Holiday and Summer Programmes. Ongoing peer support is facilitated through our Social and Support Groups.

Counselling

The Counselling service underwent review in 2006 and now offers free services in a range of areas. Following an individual assessment the service addresses clients' needs as appropriate.

Long-term Counselling

Adult and adolescent members of one-parent families can avail of 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.

As with all our services, an on-site crèche is provided and counselling is free to the client, so we usually experience waiting lists which we work hard to keep as short as possible.

Solution Focused Sessions

This service allows clients to attend for 1-3 sessions to deal with a particular issue, without requiring an ongoing commitment to the therapeutic process. This new service, introduced in 2006 has proved hugely popular with clients in dealing with specific difficulties they are facing at a given time. The counsellors also refer clients to other One Family services that might be helpful to them, e.g. support groups and skills courses.

Crisis Pregnancy Counselling

One Family Supports offers non-directive Crisis Pregnancy Counselling to both women and couples experiencing crisis pregnancy. As part of the Positive Options campaign, fully qualified counsellors explore all options with the client and provide information as required. For those who decide to proceed with the pregnancy One Family offers regular, ongoing practical support (available to both parents) through the pregnancy and following the birth.

Post- Termination Counselling

A post-abortion counselling service is available from One Family Supports, 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.

This new approach to our Counselling service was piloted in 2006. Feedback has indicated that it is already better meeting client needs and allowing the counselling team to move more swiftly to provide support to clients.

Social and Support Groups

The One Family Social and Support Groups were established to empower parents in one-parent families to overcome isolation and loneliness. As a lone parent it is sometimes hard to find adult company or to make new friends

The Social and Support Groups provide a safe, relaxed environment where parents can meet, plan shared activities and chat about issues that affect them and their children. The groups incorporate activities that parents can enjoy while their children are being cared for in One Family's crèche as well as activities for both parents and children. Increasingly, the organisation of the Social Group has been taken over by the parents themselves.

Summer Programme

Our weekly outings over the summer to places such as the zoo and the beach offer parents an opportunity to spend time with their children in a supported environment, allowing them to fully relax and enjoy each other's company. They are also designed to help people meet other parents who are in similar circumstances to themselves. This is done in safe and easy circumstances ending in lasting friendships and a supportive community.

Summer Holiday

The aims of the One Family summer holiday are to allow families the opportunity to strengthen the mutual support they have begun to develop while accessing other services in One Family; to allow the families access to places and activities that they would not be able to otherwise afford and to give families the chance to learn something new about Ireland and its heritage.

In 2006, 16 families went to Wexford on our 2006 Family Holiday. The Quality Hotel in Wexford provided a friendly, welcoming environment for the families. The 3-day trip provided a number of activities for the families, including a trip to the Yola Heritage Farm where the children enjoyed the 'Alamo' playground and 'Animal Corner' while parents took an historical tour around the farm. The families also enjoyed time at Rosslare Beach, where parents were able to relax with their children knowing that professional support was available from staff. Parents were given the choice of spending time in adult company at dinner while staff cared for their children.

Upon their return the families were all rested and relaxed and had formed lasting friendships, which improved the attendance and quality of the ties in our Social and Support Groups. For some of the families this was the first family holiday they had ever had. Adults expressed a renewed confidence and pleasure in parenting having had time in these circumstances with their children.



One Family Training & Consultancy

Spreading the learning



As family life in Ireland becomes increasingly diverse and complex, there is a growing need for training to support and resource professionals in their work with one-parent families. One Family Training & Consultancy services provide a range of training services and products which meet this need. In 2006, we delivered four new training products to a growing client base of professionals around Ireland.

All of our training is developed from our expertise and experience of delivering client services. It is also informed by our analysis of relevant policy developments and by our membership network. Our range of training services reflect the innovative work which we are doing with our clients in areas such as parenting, adult education, counselling and advocacy.

This includes:

Positive Parenting: Training for Trainers – training for those who wish to facilitate parenting programmes for lone parents.

One-Parent Families: Diversity, Issues and Rights – general awareness training on the issues relevant to one-parent families.

Crisis Pregnancy: Training for Counsellors – training specifically for counsellors who work with clients experiencing crisis pregnancy.

Crisis Pregnancy: General Awareness Training – awareness training for staff who work with clients experiencing crisis pregnancy.

In response to demand, we have successfully expanded our training nationally and have delivered training to professionals in Waterford, Galway, Tralee, Limerick and Dublin. In 2006, the training service trained over 200 people across a wide variety of disciplines. In 2007, several of these courses will be expanded and adapted based on feedback from course participants.

The strong demand for our training services illustrates how many professionals are keen to access the benefits of our experience. Feedback to the service indicates that professionals are actively using what they have learned to improve the services that they deliver to one-parent families. Through delivery of our training products, we are leading change nationally for all for one-parent families through supporting organisations and other professionals in their work.

“One Family’s training met and exceeded my expectations. The manual and training are excellent and will be used with many different groups within the project I am working on and not just the initial group I had planned”

“The info provided was excellent and the manual is an excellent tool in helping to deliver a parenting programme. Very worthwhile.”

There was an excellent discussion of the issues. The good variety of training supports and exercises helped me to absorb the information quickly and easily. There are good resources to take away. Now I feel I have a better understanding of one-parent families and how to work more effectively with them.”

Participants, One Family Training Courses 2006



One Family can*

Membership that makes a real difference

One Family works on the basis that it is only by listening to clients and members that we can make a real difference at policy level. One Family works to empower members politically, to make their voices heard and to provide an opportunity for them to campaign for their rights and those of their families.

One Family's Campaign & Advocacy Network

can* campaigns to make Ireland a place in which one-parent families enjoy equality, adequate income and the same respect as other families. The network includes parents, those who work with one-parent families and those who have an interest in the issues affecting one-parent families. can* actively involves members in One Family's campaign activities bringing awareness of the real issues facing one-parent families to policy makers and to the public.

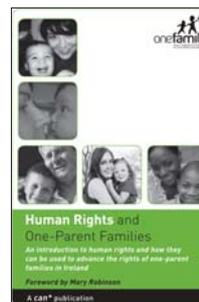
In 2006, One Family surveyed can* members to obtain their views on the development of the membership network and on the creation of an even stronger campaigning force for one-parent families in Ireland. The results of this survey, which will be distributed in 2007, indicated a strong desire among many of our members to become more actively involved in the work of One Family.

Publication of Human Rights Booklet

“The key to systemic and long-term change is to empower people to change the world for themselves...the structural inequality and disadvantage faced by one-parent families is not merely a problem of circumstance, but a denial of basic human rights.”

Mary Robinson

Bringing about long-term and fundamental change in the lives of one-parent families in Ireland requires a new way of thinking. One Family is committed to using a human-rights-based approach to demonstrate that one-parent families continue to experience inequalities and discrimination relative to other families, and to challenge Government to acknowledge their duty to protect and promote the human rights of all families.



On 8 November 2006, can* launched *Human Rights and One-Parent Families*. This booklet provides an introduction to key international human rights conventions that have been ratified by the Irish Government. It details how such conventions can be used to advance the rights of one-parent families, particularly in relation to poverty and social exclusion.



One Family Policy

Working for fundamental change

As well as working with individual clients, One Family Policy works to effect fundamental change at societal and Governmental level. The work of One Family's Policy team is critical in effecting positive change for all one-parent families. One Family's aim is to provide policymakers with a clear and informed understanding of the real issues affecting one-parent families. Through this the organisation increases the effectiveness of public policy and plays a crucial role in realising the rights of all members of all one-parent families.

One Family Policy works to achieve real change a national policy level in a number of key policy areas aimed at making a measurable difference in quality of life of one-parent families. These issues include education, training, employment, childcare, income adequacy, parenting, family and child support and legal recognition for all family types.

Changes in State Support for Lone Parents

During 2006, One Family was actively involved in working with Government, Government Departments, relevant State agencies and other NGOs in responding to government proposals for fundamental changes in state supports for lone parents (now referred to as 'activation strategies' for lone parents).

In preparing our response to the proposed changes, One Family consulted a wide range of relevant groups including our **can*** members, clients and other interested parties. We submitted a detailed paper on the proposals and presented our response at a consultation day attended by then Minister for Social & Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan TD.

One Family continues to work with others to ensure that relevant policies are developed and implemented with the best interests of one-parent families foremost in mind. The main focus is on moving at-risk families out of poverty and improving their quality of life. In particular One Family strives to ensure that the importance of parenting and family life are recognised and supported.



Policy Positions

In 2006 One Family published a major policy paper on *Quality of Life for One Parent Families*. This paper was circulated to politicians, policy makers, **can*** members and other interested groups.

The key message emerging from this paper is the need to address a wide range of interconnected issues affecting one-parent families if proposed policy changes are to be successful in improving the quality of life of such families.

Key Policy Submissions

In 2006, One Family Policy continued to contribute to national policy decisions affecting one-parent families through key submissions to relevant Government departments and State bodies. These included submissions to:

- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on Domestic Partnership
- The Department of Social & Family Affairs on Lone Parent Reforms
- The Irish Human Rights Commission on Making Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Effective
- The Oireachtas Committee on Child Protection
- The Department of the Taoiseach on Social Partnership

One Family was also actively involved in the government's proposed **children's rights referendum**. The organisation sought to ensure that the proposed referendum would provide enforceable rights for children and would be based on equality for children and adults in marital and non-marital families.

Initiative on Lone parents

In 2006 One Family was represented on the Steering Committee that is overseeing the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's initiative on lone parents. The initiative provides funding to City and County Development Boards to develop and pilot new approaches to supporting lone parents to participate in the labour market. The results of this initiative will be used by One Family and other organisations. It will inform policies and programmes aimed at assisting lone parents to access employment and to create new opportunities for themselves and their families.

Making connections

A crucial part of pursuing our policy and campaigning objectives is making links with key organisations. In 2006 One Family was represented on the Board of the EAPN, the INOU and the Children's Rights Alliance. The organisation is also involved in a number of other networks, including the Network of One-Parent Family organisations and the UK/Irish Lone Parents Forum.



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 the placement of 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

Please 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 2006, including:

- Club di Dublino
- Combat Poverty Agency
- Crisis Pregnancy Agency
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Department of Social & Family Affairs (Information Section)
- Dublin Bus
- Dublin City Council
- Family Support Agency
- HSE Northern Area
- Network Dublin
- Reception & Integration Agency
- Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

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

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
- Karen Griffin*
- Company Secretary: Karen Kiernan

*Karen Griffin resigned in April 2006.

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

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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Email: info@onefamily.ie

Website: www.onefamily.ie

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