



NEWS RELEASE

28 February 2008

Minister Cullen launches Lone Parent Support Publication

Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen TD today (28 February 2008) launched a new booklet entitled '**Work it Out**' published by Treoir – the national federation of statutory and voluntary agencies which provide services for unmarried parents and their children. Established in 1975, Treoir aims to promote the rights and welfare of parents who are not married to each other and the rights and welfare of their children.

The 61–page publication aims to inform lone parents about **education and training** supports (such as the Back to Education Allowance); **employment** supports (such as the Back to Work Allowance and the Family Income Supplement) and **childcare** provision. It also provides information about other social welfare entitlements such as Maternity Benefit, Maternity Leave, Child Benefit, the One-Parent Family Payment, the Early Childcare Supplement and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.

Speaking at a visit to Treoir's offices in Dublin today, **Minister Martin Cullen, TD** said: "Information initiatives such as this booklet, empowers people to consider their options and access their rights. I am happy to launch this easy-to-follow guide which will prove invaluable to lone parents looking at their options when they are starting work or re-entering the workforce, or returning to education and training." In relation to Treoir's wider brief, the Minister said: "The work undertaken and advanced by Treoir over the past 30 years has influenced change in policy with regard to lone parent families."



Department of Social and Family Affairs

The Minister said: "With the pace of life and the changes that are taking place in crucial family and community structures it has become more difficult for people to maintain strong and stable relationships. Separation and divorce, while not at the levels of other countries, are nonetheless on the increase.

"Children above all benefit from stability and continuity in family life and from a regular and close relationship with both parents. The changing nature of family life in Ireland today has by its nature led to a greater role for state interaction with families."

Referring to the Government's discussion paper "Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents," the Minister said: "In essence this discussion paper aims to point the way towards new opportunities and greater fulfilment for lone parents and towards better lives and prospects for their children."

The Minister said: "One of the proposed reforms in that document, and one that I know is of particular interest to Treoir, is the removal of the cohabitation rule which acts as a disincentive to lone parents forming relationships. In 21st century Ireland, this is not an aspect of social policy that I agree with, and is one of the issues that I propose to change. The social welfare system should be neutral with regard to people's choice of lifestyle or living arrangements. It should not be a disincentive to family formation. Under the proposals, the contingency of lone parenthood would no longer exist. Instead, a new payment would be made to all parents (living alone or with a partner) with young children on a low income."

Minister Cullen said: "I intend to bring forward proposals for legislation that will have at its core the introduction of a policy that will set about opening up more choice and opportunities for lone parents."



Minister Cullen concluded by congratulating Treoir on the publication of their booklet, and on the organisation's "committed work undertaken to date," as the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children. "This work goes back to your establishment in the seventies", he said, "when you recognised - even at that time - the evident diversity of family life in Ireland."

Editor's note:

Copies of the booklet 'Work it Out' are available from Treoir. Contact lo-call 1890 252 084 or see www.treoir.ie. The contact address for Treoir is: 14 Gandon House, Custom House Square, IFSC, Dublin 1.

The publication has been funded by the **Department of Social and Family Affairs**.

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