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A place to call our own: Research on Housing and Housing Support needs of Young Lone Parents in Tallaght

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'A Place to Call Our Own'

Research on the Housing
and
Housing Support Needs of Young Lone Parents in Tallaght

April 2003

Research by Liza Costello and Liz Kerrins

Researcher's Acknowledgements

The Centre for Social and Educational Research

The Centre for Social and Educational Research, an independent research and policy analysis body, was established in 1997 and is located within the Dublin Institute of Technology.

In 2001, a dedicated Families Research Unit was established. This development was a consequence of the increasing number of research and evaluation studies undertaken by the Centre in the broad field of families research and of the need to consolidate and advance the families research agenda. The work of this Research Unit is informed by, and informs, the research carried out by the other two units – the Residential Child Care and Juvenile Justice Research Unit and the Early Childhood Care and Education Research Unit. This is an important aspect of the research carried out, given the cross cutting nature of various policies targeted at families and children.

The researchers would like to offer their appreciation to the members of the research advisory committee for all their help and in this project. They are:

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- Anne Prendiville, Tallaght Partnership;
- Julie Cruickshank, South Western Area Health Board;
- Mick Fagan, South Dublin County Council;
- Sandra Fox, Young Families Matter;
- Michael Birmingham, Abhaile;
- Patricia Quinn, Tallaght Lone Parents Centre.

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Liza Costello and Liz Kerrins

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Summary of the main tenure options for young lone parents in Dublin

Executive Summary

This is the executive summary to the research study on the needs of young lone parents in Tallaght.

Rationale for the Research

In January 2002, the Young Families Matter project was established under the Tallaght Partnership's Strategic Plan 2001-2006. In the development stage of this service, it emerged that a key and consistently re-emerging need of young lone parents related to housing and housing support. In response to this, the Centre for Social and Educational Research, DIT, was commissioned by the same Consortium involved in the development of the Young Families Matter project, to conduct a research project on the housing and housing support needs of young lone parents in Tallaght. The Young Families Matter Consortium is made up of representatives of the following agencies:

- Barnardos;
- South Western Area Health Board;
- Tallaght Partnership;
- Tallaght Youth Service;
- Tallaght Lone Parents Centre;
- Lone parent involved with the project;
- St. Aidan's National School;
- St. Anne's National School.

Members of the research advisory group for this research project are:

- Abhaile (Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit);
- Barnardos;
- South Dublin County Council;
- South West Area Health Board;
- Tallaght Lone Parents Centre;
- Tallaght Partnership;
- Young Families Matter.

Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to identify the housing and housing support needs of young lone parents in Tallaght, to situate these needs within the current housing policy context and to make specific recommendations in relation to addressing these needs.

Objectives

- to collect information about young lone parent's housing experiences;
- to collect information about young lone parent's housing needs;
- to review existing service provision;
- to highlight existing gaps in housing provision for this group;
- to review a model of best practice;
- to find out what they want for the future; and,
- to present recommendations relating to the delivery of services responding to the unmet housing and housing support needs of this group.

A key element of the study is its focus on promoting the voices of young lone parents themselves and documenting their wants and needs in accessing housing and support. Taking their views into account makes a valuable contribution towards the current debate and is crucial in the successful development of provision for this group.

Methodology

There were five key methods involved in this research project:

1. The review of recent research literature;
2. The conduct and analysis of a community survey of young lone parents in Tallaght;
3. The conduct and analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with young lone parents in housing need, including those living in Tallaght as well as those who want to live there;
4. Consultation with local service providers to identify gaps in service provision;
5. The review of a model of best practice for the service development in Tallaght, with specific focus on a housing support project in the UK.

Research Literature and Policy Context

Research literature shows that the financial reality for young lone parents is that they are at high risk of poverty, with high levels of welfare dependency, unemployment and low educational attainment. In terms of accessing and retaining housing, research shows that younger lone parents tend to rely on rental accommodation, both local authority and private rented. There is also evidence of an increasing reliance on the Supplementary Welfare Allowance to support lone parents in the private rented sector. A low level of social housing output places young lone parents in an even more vulnerable position in trying to access housing.

The National Anti Poverty Strategy stresses the correlation between poverty and lone parenthood and in particular emphasises the important bearing of the availability of childcare on the extent to which lone parents are dependent on social welfare payments.

The establishment of the Family Research Unit in the Department of Social and Family Affairs reflects recent efforts made to facilitate the development of an integrated family policy in Ireland. However, despite this, and the growing amount of research literature highlighting the relationship between young lone parenthood, poverty and housing need, there are still no specific national housing policies targeted at lone parents. The housing needs of lone parents in Ireland, of all ages, are generally met through the housing options available to the general population.

Irish housing policy is set out in the DELG 1995 report, *Social Housing – The Way Ahead,* which describes its objective as being 'to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment, and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice.' Each local authority has responsibility to implement this policy on a local level. With the passing of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, authorities were obliged to produce housing strategies. The Act also marked a move towards mixed tenure housing developments, with Part V of the act requiring that 15-20% of units in new residential units in each local authority be social/affordable units.

The residualisation of local authority housing has left the authorities as housers of last resort for those that cannot afford to purchase accommodation, such as young lone parents. This is evident in Tallaght, the South Dublin County Council Housing Strategy noting that almost 81 per cent of housing applicants have annual incomes of or less than £10,000 (€12,700) meaning that market led housing choices are not an option for many seeking homes in Tallaght. Moreover, the SDCC housing strategy shows that over the Strategy period, social housing demand will exceed social housing output.

Key Findings: Community Survey and Qualitative Interviews

Baseline Information of Survey Respondents

- Over two fifths of respondents were aged between 21 to 22 years. A further 44 per cent were broken evenly into the age groups of 16-18 years and 19-20 years, and a remaining 13 per cent were in the latter age group of 23-25 years;
- The majority of respondents (60%) had one child. Among those who have two children, over 73 per cent were aged between 21 and 25 years. All three respondents who had three children were also in this age group.
- No respondents reported ever being married.

Current Housing Situation

- Almost one half, at 46 per cent, of respondents are living with their parents. Other common circumstances are renting from the county council, at 29 per cent and renting from a private landlord, at 17 per cent . One respondent was homeless.
- The vast majority (86 per cent) of those aged over 21 years were renting housing from the county council, whereas for those living with their parents, 71.5 per cent were aged between 16 and 20 years;
- The majority of respondents with one child are either renting from a private landlord, at 23.3 per cent or living with their parents, at 63.3 per cent. Two thirds of those with two children are renting from the County Council, as are two thirds of those with three children.

Preferred Housing Options and Perceived Barriers to Accessing Them

- 70 per cent of respondents said that their current housing was not the choice they would prefer, and further 8.5 per cent said they did not know, leaving only 21.3 per cent who were satisfied with their current housing situation;
- When asked how likely it was that they would access their preferred housing, one third responded with, 'not likely', and a further 12 per cent said 'never'. Over one quarter (26 per cent) said they did not know, leaving only 29 per cent who felt this was likely or very likely;
- Those aged between 16 and 20 years felt it less likely that they would access their preferred housing than those aged between 21 and 25 years;
- The most popular option, at 55.3 per cent was renting a home from the county council;
- Qualitative data analysis revealed that the private rented sector in Tallaght is considered an unrealistic housing option for young lone parents, due to high rent demands that exceeded rent allowance payments;
- All qualitative interviewees living in shared accommodation expressed the wish for their own, independent accommodation. Local authority housing was perceived as the most realistic means by which this could be achieved.
- Identified barriers to accessing preferred housing included:
  - the length of the county council housing waiting lists;
  - low income; and,
  - childcare and housing costs.

Other Housing Needs

- The biggest identified housing issue of respondents was overcrowding, which affected 39 per cent of the sample. Other significant housing issues include repairs and inadequate heating, affording to pay the rent and wanting to move to another area of Tallaght;

Importance of Accessing Housing in Local Community

- 89.4 per cent grew up in Tallaght;

- Just over 68 per cent wished to remain living in Tallaght. 8.5 per cent said they did not, yet a further 23.4 per cent said they did not know;
- Over 56 per cent said that they wished to remain living in the same area of Tallaght;
- The most popular reasons for wanting to remain in the same area were proximity to the respondent's family (66%), feeling that it was their home (47%) and proximity to friends (36%). Physical and structural properties of the area, such as the local school, play areas and general facilities emerged as less significant factors.

Lone Parenthood and Accessing Housing

- Just under four fifths had been living at home when they had their first child;
- The most significant problem in accessing housing on becoming a single parent was gaining access to the County Council housing waiting list (45%). Other difficulties experienced by a high proportion of respondents included pressure from their family or parents to leave their home, finding a private landlord who rent to them, accessing a deposit and first month's payment to rent privately and 'getting information on how the Council make their decisions on renting homes';
- In terms of past housing difficulties, respondents noted their experience of a range of related issues, including overcrowding, difficulty in affording their rent or mortgage, needing repairs to their home and inadequate heating, difficulties with neighbours and difficulties in paying bills. Four respondents had experienced an eviction or notice to quit.

Identified Support Needs

- In terms of support options that would have been useful in the past, the most popular was access to housing, 'for a year or two while sorting permanent housing.' Other popular options here were 'someone to explain all the housing options to me,' and 'help applying for a Council home';
- In terms of supports that respondents would find helpful now, over 56 per cent said they would find advice of social welfare and housing benefits useful. Information and advice on housing options also emerged as important. Over two thirds said they would benefit from money advice and help to budget. 25 per cent identified

supported housing as a positive support option. 31 per cent said they would find help in finding a new home useful;

- Level of awareness of available housing options varied. While almost all respondents expressed awareness of renting a house from the Council, only 41 per cent were aware of the option of home ownership through a private mortgage. 78 per cent expressed awareness of the option of renting through a private landlord. Awareness of specific Council housing schemes also varied. Knowledge of some schemes was quite low, such as Improvement works in lieu of Local Authority Housing.

Financial Reality of Being a Young Lone Parents

- The overwhelmingly prevalent income source was the Lone Parent Family Payment, which was received by 90 per cent. 14 percent received rent allowance from the local health board, and eight per cent received maintenance payments from an (ex) partner. Only one respondent was working full time and a further two worked on a part time basis;
- Through qualitative interviews, it emerged that young lone parents in housing need face constant constraints and difficulties in their lives, in terms of economic security, accessing the labour market or further education and in their role as parent;
- Interviewees described the economic constraints placed on them as lone parents, and barriers to accessing the labour market or furthering their education. While these barriers in part relate to their responsibilities as a parent, they also spoke of external constraints, such as lack of affordable and secure housing and childcare.

Parenting

- Some parents in qualitative interviews spoke of the difficulties they initially experienced on being a young lone parent, such as adapting to and responding to new responsibilities. Interviewees also spoke in detail of the additional stresses and strains they experienced due to simply being a young lone parent, as well as the constant insecurity they felt from their current housing need;
- In qualitative interviews, participants spoke in detail of the additional stresses and strains they experienced due to simply being a young lone parent, which was

exacerbated by the constant insecurity they felt from their current housing need. The interviewee who was homeless felt under particular strain, which was caused primarily by her insecure tenure and living in shared temporary accommodation.

Key Findings: Study Visit to Model of Best Practice: A Supported Housing Project for Young Parents, Tipton, Wolverhampton

The Tipton supported housing project for young families presents a model of good practice for the development of one aspect within a range of support for young lone parents in Tallaght. A factor contributing to the success of this project is that it is located within a continuum of support models for young lone parents. Key positive features of it include:

Physical Structure/Facilities

- High standard of purpose built accommodation;
- separate accommodation units for each family;
- shared communal facilities, such as a garden and play centre (indoor and outdoor);
- onsite resource flat.

Support

- Development of peer support among tenants;
- Compulsory individual weekly key-working sessions between support worker and tenants;
- Consultation with tenants in provision of additional supports;
- Provision of optional support services, drawn from local services and agencies, such as weekly play sessions for parents and children facilitated by professional childcare workers, monthly visits by health professionals, regular nurse visits to provide sexual health advice, a Baby First Aid class and Health and Safety Sessions.

Moving On

- Positive strong relations with the local authority;
- Guarantee of independent housing for each tenant prior to leaving the project;
- Provision of floating support for ex-tenants, varying to respond to the needs of the individual.

Agency Integration

- The Project Manager described the importance of linking in with local agencies who provide a range of services relevant to the needs of young lone parents, in the success of the project. This would have particular relevance in relation to the provision of additional support services within a supported housing project.

Key Findings: Consultation with Service Providers

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from the following relevant local agencies:

- Young Families Matter;
- Teenage Parent Support Project;
- Abhaile (Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit);
- Focus Ireland (Transitional housing unit);
- South Dublin County Council.

Issues raised related to housing need and independent housing provision of young lone parents in Tallaght, the introduction of supported housing for young lone parents in Tallaght and the categories of support that would be beneficial for this group.

Service providers' perceptions of the housing and support needs of young lone parents reflect the perceived needs of this group themselves, as emerged in the findings of the community survey and qualitative data analysis;

- Low social housing output is making it more and more difficult for young lone parents to access independent housing;
- Young lone parents need particular support in raising self confidence;
- The Focus Ireland Family Transition Units offers a range of support for homeless families. Lessons from this model are particularly pertinent to those who may have higher needs, such as homeless lone parents and/or lone parents with a history of drug use.

Perceived support needs of young lone parents included:

- access to information and advice relating to housing and welfare entitlements;
- development of parenting skills;
- Budgeting and money management advice;
- Building self confidence;
- Accessing education or training courses;
- Accessing the labour market;
- Living skills.

Recommendations

The following is a summary of key recommendations arising from the research. The full version of this (including sub recommendations relating to the development and operation of a transitional supported housing young lone parent family unit) are set out in chapter seven).

Relationship between local voluntary services, the SDCC and the Health Board- A Consortium Approach

Recommendation 1 In recognition of the values of a multi-agency approach to tackling housing need in a local area, we recommend that the current research advisory committee continues to meet in the capacity of a consortium to forward the development of the following recommendations. This approach ensures avoidance of any duplication of service provision and smooth referral of recognised need to the appropriate service.

Information and Advice on Housing Options and Support Services Available to Young Lone Parents

Recommendation 2 Information

South Dublin County Council should provide clear and user friendly information on the local authority housing options available to young lone parents, and the procedures involved in accessing these housing options. Staff should be trained in providing clear information and advice to young lone parents.

Recommendation 3 Information

Local agencies should be proactive in the provision and dissemination of clear information on all housing options available to young lone parents, both local authority and private rented sector housing.

Childcare, Education and Training

Recommendation 4 Childcare

SWAHB: In line with the objectives of the National Anti Poverty Strategy, efforts should be made to increase the level of financed childcare facilities in the Tallaght region.

Recommendation 5 Education and Training

Local Service Providers: Services working with lone parents should continue to encourage and assist them in accessing education and training courses.

Department of Education and Science: As recommended in the Evaluation of the Teen Parents Support Initiative, we recommend the development of a national funding scheme delivered through education and training sectors, to financially support young parents with the expenses of participation in education and training, most especially childcare costs.

Lack of Housing Options – Local Authority Output and the Private Rented Sector

Recommendation 6 Defining Homelessness *Department of the Environment and Local Government:* We recommend that, as in the UK, young lone parents who are living with their parents, in overcrowded conditions, should be identified as being homeless.

Recommendation 7 Development of housing policy specific for young lone parents

There is currently no specific national housing policy for lone parents, despite the strong relationship between local authority housing and lone parenthood. We recommend that a specific housing policy be developed to respond to the needs of this group, which should result in a higher diversity of housing types available.

Recommendation 8 Supplementary Welfare Allowances

Department of Social and Family Affairs: Supplementary Rent Allowances should be increased in order to reflect current rent levels in the private rented sector

Recommendation 9 – Introduction of Rent Controls

Department of the Environment and Local Government: Rent controls should be introduced to private rented accommodation rent prices, in order to curb raising rent levels in the sector.

Recommendation 10 Type of Social Housing Stock Available

South Dublin County Council: South Dublin County Council should continue to use housing waiting lists as a guide to the type of housing need, in terms of household size.

Recommendation 11 Level of Social Housing Stock Output

In order for the development of any support and housing support services for young lone parents to act as an effective response to the housing needs of this group, there is a need for a significant increase in the level of social housing output in the South Dublin County Council area. Without this, access to suitable move on independent accommodation will be impossible.

The Development of a Continuum of Care in Support Services Provision

Recommendation 12 – Choice in Provision of Services: A Continuum of Care

All involved statutory and voluntary service providers: Research shows that a range of support services, within a continuum of care, should be provided, in order to respond to the varying levels of support needs experienced by young lone parents. In line with this, we recommend that a range of services are provided, in order to respond to a range of needs. Each aspect of support provision in a continuum of care is outlined below.

Recommendation 13 Low Support (Level One)

All Involved Statutory and Voluntary Agencies:

- A *floating support worker* should be employed when tenants begin to move on from the project. This will ensure that a successful transition is made from transitional housing to independent living for tenants.
- A drop in centre should be established, through which young lone parents may access advice and information on housing and other relevant issues, such as childcare, education and training courses.

Recommendation 14 Medium Support (Level Two) The development of a Transitional Supported Housing Unit for Young Lone Parents in Tallaght

All Involved Statutory and Voluntary Agencies:

We recommend the establishment of a transitional housing project in Tallaght for young lone parents. This would provide low to medium support, and access to self contained, independent high quality apartments for each family.

Recommendation 15 High Support (Level Three)

All Involved Statutory and Voluntary Agencies:

Some young parents, for example some of those who are homeless, who are currently substance dependent and have no motivation to stop using drugs, have high support needs that could not adequately be met within the above housing project. Consultation with service providers highlighted the need for **long term high support accommodation** for young parents with such high support needs.

Recommendation 16 Support for Young Lone Parents under 18 years

South Western Area Health Board:

Local authorities cannot provide housing for young lone parents under the age of 18 years. This group fall under the care of local health boards. There is currently no provision for young lone parents in this age group in housing need. We recommend that the South Western Area Health Board identify the housing and related support needs of this group and provide a service in response to these needs.

Further Research

Recommendation 17 Young Couples

Though this issue is outside of the remit of this research, many young parents may still be involved in a relationship with the father of the child, or have started a new relationship. However, needs still arise for young couples, in terms of accessing both housing and support. There is a need for research into the needs of low income young couples.

Glossary of Terms

The following is a glossary of the definitions of terms that we have employed in this study.

- **Floating Support**

Floating support refers to support provided to families via visiting support workers. Support is provided on consent of the targeted family, and can involve a range of assistance, from information on social and housing benefits and rights, to linking parents into appropriate services such as training courses, counselling, or child care.

- **Homelessness**

The 1988 Housing Act defines a person as homeless if

(a) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or

(b) he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution and is so living because he has no accommodation of a kind referred to in paragraph (a) and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.

- **Housing Need**

The definition of housing need adopted for this study is derived from that developed by the Scottish Executive, which states, that 'the essential feature of need is that it embodies some judgement as to what minimum standard of housing people <u>should have</u> irrespective of their ability to pay for that housing.'

- **One Parent Family Payment**

The One Parent Family Payment is a means-tested payment which is made to men or women who are caring for a child or children without the support of a partner. The scheme was introduced in January 1997.

- **Social Housing**

The term social housing refers to a wide range of housing policy responses to low income households. These include local authority housing and housing provided by the voluntary sector and housing associations.

- **Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA)**

The SWA is a means tested rent allowance scheme provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs to low income households. Basic SWA is made up of a personal rate for the applicant and additional amounts for any adult dependant and/or child dependants.

- **Supported Housing**

The UK government policy paper *Supporting People* defines supported housing as, 'any service which provides support, assistance, advice or counselling to an individual with particular needs with a view to enabling that individual to occupy, or continue to occupy, as the person's sole or main residence, residential accommodation other than excepted accommodation.'

- **South Dublin County Council Loans & Grants**[1]

1. Shared Ownership Scheme

The Shared Ownership Scheme is designed to facilitate access to home ownership in two or more stages. Applicants approved under the scheme select a suitable property which will be purchased on their behalf by the local authority and given to them by way of a Shared Ownership Lease. The maximum loan advanced under the scheme is €152,700.

2. Home Improvement Loans.

Home Improvement Loans are available to eligible applicants to enable them to carry out improvements to their dwellings. The maximum secured loan available is €38,000 and unsecured €15,000.The loan shall not exceed 90% of the cost of the proposed works as approved by South Dublin County Council.

[1] These descriptions are taken from the South Dublin County Council website, http://www.sdublincoco.ie/index.aspx?pageid=84&deptid=7&pageno=3

3. Mortgage Allowance Scheme

The Mortgage Allowance Scheme assists tenants and tenant purchasers of local authority dwellings who wish to return their dwelling to the authority and purchase or build a private dwelling for their own occupation. The amount of the allowance is €11,450 payable to the lending agency over 5 years. Applications should be made to the Local Authority for the area in which the private dwelling is being purchased or built.

4. Disabled Persons Grants Scheme

The Disabled Persons Grant Scheme assists persons in the provision or adaptation of accommodation for disabled persons. The grant available is 90% of the cost of the works up to a maximum of €20,320. (Where a property is rented from the council the application should be made through the Housing Maintenance Section) Link

5. Disabled Persons new House Grants Scheme

The Disabled Persons New House Grant Scheme assists persons in the provision or adaptation of accommodation for disabled persons. The grant will be considered where a property has been built for less than 12 months.The maximum grant available is €12,700.

6. Sales Scheme

The Sales Scheme Section operates the Tenant Purchase Scheme for local authority dwellings. The most recent scheme was announced by the Minister for the Environment in May 1995 and adopted by the Council in June 1995. This scheme is ongoing with no closing date and tenants who hold a tenancy from the Council for at least one year may apply to purchase their dwelling.

7. Loan Applications for Purchase of Local Authority Houses

Where an applicant under the 1995 Sales Scheme is approved to purchase their dwelling they must finance the purchase by way of a mortgage or from their own resources or a combination of both. Applicants who wish to finance by way of a mortgage can do so through the council or an outside bank or building society.

Chapter One *Introduction*

1.1 Rationale for the Research

In January 2002, the Young Families Matter project was established under the Tallaght Partnership's Strategic Plan 2001-2006, with the aim to:

> Provide an intensive and integrated intervention to 20 young lone parents and their children with a view to enhancing their personal skills, their parenting capacity and the quality of life of the parents and their children.

The objectives of the project included:

- reducing parents isolation;
- improving self confidence in parents;
- improving parenting skills and knowledge;
- assisting parents in acquiring new skills or knowledge in relation to their individual needs;
- supporting children's developmental and socialisation needs; and
- providing an integrated support service.

In the planning and development of this service, it emerged that a key and consistently re-emerging need of young lone parents related to housing and housing support. In response to this, this research was commissioned by the same Consortium involved in the development of the *Young Families Matter* project, with a view to determining the housing needs of young lone parents in Tallaght, to situate these needs within the current housing policy context and to make specific recommendations. Member organisations and bodies of the Consortium for Young Families Matter are:

- Barnardos;
- South Western Area Health Board;
- Tallaght Partnership;
- Tallaght Youth Service;
- Tallaght Lone Parents Centre;
- Lone parent involved with the project;

- St. Aidan's National School;
- St. Anne's National School.

Members of the research advisory group are:

- Abhaile (Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit);
- Barnardos;
- South Dublin County Council;
- South West Area Health Board;
- Tallaght Lone Parents Centre;
- Tallaght Partnership;
- Young Families Matter.

1.2 An Overview of Relevant Voluntary and Statutory Services in Tallaght

There are a number of services in the Tallaght area that respond to the needs of young lone parents. Voluntary and community development organisations include:

- Abhaile (Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit);
- Barnardos;
- Tallaght Lone Parents Centre;
- Tallaght Partnership;
- Young Families Matter.

SWAHB Community Care Services that link with lone parents include:

- Public Health Nursing Service
- Social Work Service
- Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy etc
- Family Support Services
- The Family Resource Centre in Main St, Tallaght – staffed by Social Workers and Childcare workers

There are also plans for the development of a Social Work Youth Homelessness Team, which would be staffed by childcare workers and social workers. The SWAHB also supports, through funding:

- The Lucena Clinic – a child and family mental health service;
- The Daughters of Charity child and family centre (aka as the Jobstown Family Centre);
- Three nurseries: Barnardos, St Aidan's in Brookfield, St Anne's in Fettercairn;
- The Rainbow Centre in An Cosan – and contributes towards education courses there.

The Children and Family Service is also in the process of instigating a Parent Child Psychological Programme – this will be open and available to all families with newborn infants. Finally, SWAHB Mental Health and Addiction Services in Tallaght include:

- Tallaght Mental Health Services – care in the community or those with mental health issues
- Two psychiatric out patient clinics
- Addiction Services – offer counselling, methadone maintenance, outreach etc.

1.3 Single Lone Parenthood in Tallaght: A Brief Overview

The area of Tallaght incorporates the following 13 District Electoral Divisions: Avonbeg, Belgard, Fettercairn, Glenview, Jobstown, Killinarden, Kilnamanagh, Kiltipper, Kingswood, Millbrook, Oldbawn, Springfield and Tymon.

Table 1.31 below shows the total population within each Tallaght DED, by gender[2]. It shows that gender breakdown is relatively even within each area, with a marginally higher number of women than men in Tallaght, at 51.5 per cent to 49.5 per cent, respectively. The total population of Tallaght is 62,290.

[2] It should be noted that these data relate to the year 1996.

Table 1.31 *Tallaght population within each DED, by Gender*

DED	Male	Female	Total Population
Avonbeg	950	1,017	1,967
Belgard	1,082	985	2,067
Fettercairn	2,674	2,839	5,513
Glenview	701	729	1,430
Jobstown	3,509	3,785	7,294
Killinarden	2,399	2,571	4,970
Kilnamanagh	2,854	2,779	5,633
Kiltipper	2,621	2,616	5,237
Kingswood	2,250	2,289	4,539
Millbrook	2,271	2,237	4,508
Oldbawn	2,532	2,508	5,040
Springfield	3,911	3,892	7,803
Tymon	3,073	3,216	6,289
Total	**30,827 (49.5%)**	**31,463 (50.5%)**	**62,290 (100%)**

Table 1.32 below shows the number of total single parent households in each DED area, a breakdown of those headed by the father and by the mother and the total number of all households in each area. The total number of lone parent households in Tallaght is 2,961. We can see that the vast majority (n. 2,638: 89%) of lone parent families are headed by a mother. This finding was consistent within each area, with the number of lone mother families representing from 79 per cent to 94 per cent within each area. The highest proportion of single parent families headed by the father was found in Kilnamanagh, at 18 per cent (n. 24) of all lone parent families.

Table 1.32 *Lone Parent Families, Headed by father and mother, by DED*

DED	Father and Children*	Mother and Children*	Total number of LPF
Avonbeg	9 (7%)	123 (93%)	132 (100%)
Belgard	9 (11%)	34 (79%)	43 (100%)
Fettercairn	36 (8%)	390 (92%)	426 (100%)
Glenview	8 (14%)	49 (86%)	57 (100%)
Jobstown	32 (16%)	487 (94%)	519 (100%)
Killinarden	18 (16%)	285 (94%)	303 (100%)
Kilnamanagh	24 (18%)	107 (82%)	131 (100%)
Kiltipper	26 (10%)	239 (90%)	265 (100%)
Kingswood	19 (12%)	138 (88%)	157 (100%)
Millbrook	35 (19%)	147 (81%)	182 (100%)
Oldbawn	29 (19%)	127 (81%)	156 (100%)
Springfield	34 (13%)	233 (87%)	267(100%)
Tymon	44 (14%)	279 (86%)	323 (100%)
Total	**323 (11%)**	**2,638 (89%)**	**2,961 (100%)**

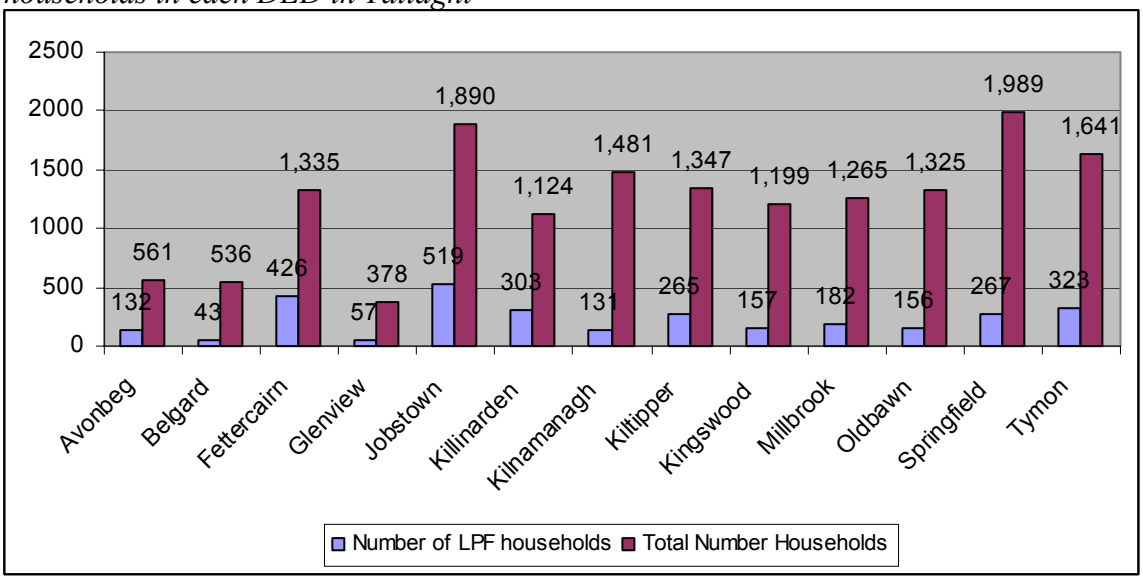
Table 1.33 below shows the number (and percentage) of lone parent families against that of the total number in each household. It shows that lone parent households make up 18 percent of the total number of households in Tallaght. The highest proportion of lone parent households was found in Fettercairn, at 32 per cent (n. 426).

Table 1.33 *Number of lone parent households against total households, by DED.*

DED	Number of LPF households	Total Number Households
Avonbeg	132 (24%)	561
Belgard	43 (8%)	536
Fettercairn	426 (32%)	1,335
Glenview	57 (15%)	378
Jobstown	519 (27%)	1,890
Killinarden	303 (27%)	1,124
Kilnamanagh	131 (9%)	1,481
Kiltipper	265 (20%)	1,347
Kingswood	157 (13%)	1,199
Millbrook	182 (14%)	1,265
Oldbawn	156 (12%)	1,325
Springfield	267 (13%)	1,989
Tymon	323 (20%)	1,641
Total	**2,961 (18%)**	**16,071**

Graph 1.31 presents the number of lone parent family households against the total number of households in each DED in Tallaght.

Graph 1.31 *Number of lone parent family households against the total number of households in each DED in Tallaght*



A second source of data on the number of lone parents in Tallaght is the number who are in receipt of the One Parent Family (OPF) Payment. The table below presents statistics on the number of OPF payment recipients, of those under 25 years, by age, for the Dublin 24 area. It should be noted that this does not represent the total number of lone parents in receipt of OPF, only those who receive the payment via the Post Office or Bank. An approximate additional 600 lone parents (analysis by age not available) receive it directly from the Department of Social and Family Affairs office in Tallaght. Further details on this number was not forthcoming. However, these data show that out of a total of 2,436 of all those in Dublin 24 who receive the OPF via the Post Office or Bank, in Tallaght, those aged 25 or under (n. 1,045) represent 43 per cent.

Table 1.34 *Number of Lone Parents in Receipt of Lone Parents Payment, by Age*

Age Group	**15-17**	**18-20**	**21-23**	**24-25**	**Total**
Number	23	173	496	353	**1,045**

1.4 Aim of the Research

The aims of this study are:

- to collect information about young lone parent's housing experiences;
- to collect information about young lone parent's housing needs;
- to review existing service provision; (?)
- to highlight existing gaps in housing provision for this group;
- to review a model of best practice;
- to find out what they want for the future; and,
- to present recommendations relating to the delivery of services responding to the unmet housing and housing support needs of this group.

The research aims to influence the development of appropriate models of housing and related support. One of the most important issues to address in relation to the delivery of support services to young parents is that of relevance. It is not only a matter of what is needed and where they should be delivered but also how best to deliver them. A key element of the study is its focus on promoting the voices of young lone parents themselves and documenting their wants and needs in accessing housing and support. Taking their views into account makes a valuable contribution towards the current debate and is crucial in the successful development of provision for this group.

1.5 Methodology

There were five key methodologies involved in this research project. They are:

6. The review of recent research literature;
7. The conduct and analysis of a community survey of young lone parents in Tallaght;
8. The conduct and analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with young lone parents in housing need, including those living in Tallaght as well as those who want to live there;
9. Consultation with local service providers to identify gaps in service provision;
10. The review of a model of best practice for the service development in Tallaght, with specific focus on a housing support project in the UK.

1.51 Community Survey

A survey questionnaire was designed, drawing from a review of previous research and feedback gained through qualitative data collection. Copies of this questionnaire were administered (with stamped addressed envelopes and an information sheet, see Appendix A) to each relevant local service provider. These were:

- Barnardos;
- Young Families Matter;
- Tallaght Lone Parents Centre;
- Abhaile;
- Tallaght Youth Service;
- An Cosan.

Questionnaires were also distributed to young lone mothers in the Tallaght area by Public Health Nurses.

1.5.1.1 A Note on Validity of Survey Data

It should be noted that this exclusive focus on the distribution of questionnaires via local community services and local public health nurses means that findings may not be representative of the population as a whole. Without the existence of a sampling frame, research on hard to reach groups, such as young lone parents, usually employs the non random sampling methods. This method is known as non probability sampling and involves seeking to replicate the population in terms of some known characteristic or characteristics (e.g. its age) in order to make inferences about some unknown characteristic (i.e., in this case, housing need). This method does not systematically ensure that every member of the population has a known and non-zero chance of inclusion.

The principal limitation of this method is that, as all members of the population do not have an equal (non zero) chance of being included in the survey, we can not be confident that findings relate to the entire population.

Advantages, however, include the following:

- *International Research:* This method has been successfully used in international research on hard to reach and elusive groups;
- *Fully representative:* This method will provide a fully representative sample of the population;
- *Feasibility:* This method is feasible, and can adapt itself to the sometimes hidden nature of the population.

The findings of the survey are consistent with many of those that emerge in the qualitative data collection for this research Moreover, they replicate findings in research in the UK on the housing and housing support needs of young lone parents, features that lend even more credence to generalisation of findings to the whole population. Finally, it should be noted here that the heavy focus in the literature review on UK research reflects a dearth of Irish research into the housing and housing support needs of young lone parents.

1.52 Literature Review

An in-depth literature review was conducted on housing and young lone parents, as well as on the relevant national social policy context for housing for young lone parents. Relevant literature was accessed via academic and public libraries, consultation with experts in the field and the internet. Policy documents were accessed through relevant public bodies.

1.53 Qualitative Interviews

Interviewees were qualitative data collection were accessed through local service providers, such as Abhaile and Tallaght Youth Service. These interviews explored experiences of housing and felt housing need among interviewees, what it meant to them to live in the local community of Tallaght, and barriers to overcoming their housing need. All of these interviews were transcribed and analysed using the method of thematic content analysis.

I.54 Consultation with Service Providers

Consultation with local voluntary and statutory service providers was undertaken in order to identify gaps in service provision and means of addressing these gaps. Consultation was also carried out with the manager of a Dublin city transitional housing project.

1.55 Model of Best Practice

In order to inform the development of a service to address the housing need of young lone parents in Tallaght, a study visit was undertaken of a housing support project for young families, in Wolverhampton, England. This visit involved interviews with residents and staff members, including the service manager, and a review of relevant documentation.

Other aspects of this stage in the research involved consultation with service providers in Dublin, including a representative from South Dublin County Council.

1.6 Report Outline

The report is laid out as follows:

- chapter two presents the literature review;
- chapter three presents an overview of the policy context for social and supported housing provision;
- chapter four presents analysis of the community survey;
- chapter five presents analysis of qualitative interviews with young lone parents;
- chapter six presents an overview of a model of best practice; and,
- chapter seven presents a discussion of findings and recommendations arising from the research.

2.1 Housing and Housing Support Needs of Young Lone Parents: A Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an exploration of the concepts of young lone parents and of housing need, a review of literature relating to the housing needs of young lone parents and an overview of relevant social policy in Ireland. This is followed by an exploration of the concept of housing support and an assessment of models of best practice of housing support for young lone parents in Ireland and the UK.

2.2 Defining a Young Lone Parent

This section gives an overview of the debates surrounding the definition of the terms young lone parents.

2.21 What is a lone parent?

A number of definitions have been adopted in describing and defining lone parents in Ireland. The definition of lone parent is far from static and is often based on the purpose for which the definition is to be used and the agencies involved. There are also differences in the needs of these groups, and between the levels of state and personal support that they groups receive.

The definition of lone parents used in the NESF report *Lone Parents* (2001) is:

> a parent rearing a child/children without the support of a partner'.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs, for the purposes of the One Parent Family Payment, are equally as broad in their definition including;

> both men and women who, for a variety of reasons, are bringing up a child(ren) without the support of a partner. A person who is unmarried, widowed, a prisoner's spouse, separated, divorced or whose marriage has been annulled and who is no longer living with his/her spouse is eligible to apply for this payment.

Both of these definitions are quite broad in that they include young lone parents and those that are older, separated people, those divorced or widowed, those with partners in prison etc. They have been used in defining lone parents for the purposes of this study.

2.22 What is a young lone parent?

Another key definitional issue is the age cut-off where one ceases to be a 'young lone parent'. This has repercussions for both the types of support required by young lone parents, as well as their legal entitlements. There are also implications for those under 18 years who are themselves considered children under child care legislation, and therefore are not applicable for local authority housing.

Research shows that there are considerable differences between lone parents of different ages in terms of their needs, and thus agency responses to that need. The needs of young parents (particularly mothers) aged 15 to 18 years are different to the concerns and needs of a 24 or 25 year old.

At a national policy level, young lone parents are taken in the NESF (2001) *Lone Parents* report to be those under 20 years of age. However, as with debates around when childhood ends, the age where one can be deemed a 'young' lone parent is not static. For the purposes of this research, we take young lone parents to be those under 25 years of age.

2.3 What is Housing Need?

Clarification of the concept of housing need is of central importance to this study. Different definitions of housing need exist, which relates in part to the different interests of agencies providing such definitions. In Ireland, housing need has tended to be defined, 'in a narrow manner, relating primarily to local authority accommodation' (CPA Poverty Briefing No. 8, 1999). Local authorities use the term 'housing need' in their periodic housing need assessments, which they have been obliged to carry out since the enactment of the 1988 Housing Act. However, the extent to which these assessments record actual need is an issue of debate. As Fahey notes, 'housing need in this sense is limited to those

who meet somewhat stringent criteria for eligibility for various kinds of social housing support'. An analysis of social housing need conducted by the ESRI in 1995 concluded that the definition of housing need underlying the assessments was too narrow as it was confined only to the need for local authority housing, excluding other forms of need (Fahey and Watson, 1995). This has since been rectified. However, it should still be noted that:

> ..even in measuring need for standard local authority housing, the definition of need used … is constricted by the same pressures which lead local authorities to ration housing provision in a strict way - shortages in supply, the high and long-term cost to the state of local authority housing and the marked policy preference for encouraging owner-occupation rather than renting (Fahey & Watson, 1995: 2).

Therefore the definition of housing need adopted by local authorities is that 'need' is based upon external determination of what consumers need, rather than wants and preferences which come into play in the private market. The issue of want versus need is key to issues relating to the role of local authorities and how they allocate dwellings.

In their guidance document for the development of housing strategies (2002), the Scottish Executive state, 'the essential feature of need is that it embodies some judgement as to what minimum standard of housing people <u>should have</u> irrespective of their ability to pay for that housing' (www.scotland.gov.uk). This minimum standard relates to availability, the physical condition of the house and how appropriate it is to the household's circumstances. Three means of setting these standards are provided. The first, *normative need*, refers to need measured according to standards set by professionals and experts. The second type of need is *expressed need.* This refers to that, 'revealed by the actions taken by individuals to requirements' and equates demand. The third and final type of need is *felt* need, which reflects 'the expectations or aspirations of the people concerned but which may not be translated into expressed need.' In relation to felt need, the political process can be used by the community to transform felt into expressed need.

Threshold's recent study of housing strategies and homeless action plans in Ireland points out the important distinction between a universal housing need, which is unrelated to status or income, and effective demand (or expressed need) for such housing, which bears a direct relation to income:

> 'One can *demand* exactly as much housing as can be paid for, but this may not amount to much (or any) housing if household income is low or insecure. Accordingly, there is no necessary equation between *demand* and *need* in a market situation' (Threshold, 2002: 14)

In defining homelessness, it has been suggested that rather than considering it as 'an all or nothing concept,' it should be thought of as, 'a continuum, with sleeping rough at one end and occupation of secure and satisfactory housing at the other' (Combat Poverty Agency, 1999). Likewise, our understanding of the concept of housing need would be aided by use of this continuum approach. For example, people sleeping rough could be considered as having the greatest housing need of all groups, as this extends to basic shelter as well as other less tangible aspects of home, such as security, privacy and identity.

If we consider a continuum of housing need, with a homeless person sleeping rough experiencing the highest level of need (or total housing deprivation), and a person living in secure, comfortable and appropriate accommodation experiencing the lowest level of need, we see that the higher the need for housing, the lower the ability to effectively demand the same. This brings us to a situation in which, 'much need may remain unmet, while at least some effective demand may have nothing to do with need, deriving instead from a desire for multiple home ownership or capital gains' (Threshold, 2002:15).

2.4 What are the housing needs of young lone parents?

The National Anti Poverty Strategy states that a person is poor if, 'if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised

from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.' The study *Women and Poverty in Ireland* highlights that women are at greater risk of poverty than men, showing that more women continue to work for lower levels of pay than men (Nolan and Watson, 1999). A recent study by the National Women's Council of Ireland on women in poverty presented,

> 'a picture of women's poverty as an experience in which they are totally immersed and which affects every aspect of their lives. This experience of poverty is diverse, multi-faceted, taking in financial distress, emotional distress, powerlessness and educational disadvantage, and (to a lesser extent) other forms of material deprivation, such as lack of housing and lack of transport.' (NWCI, 2001: 39)

The financial reality for young lone parents is that they are at even further risk of poverty and welfare dependence. In Nolan and Watson's study, specific subgroups of women emerged as having a higher risk of poverty, including lone parents and female headed households where the head is engaged in home duties. In particular relation to lone parents, the study found that 70% of lone parents fall below the 60% poverty line[3], the majority of whom are women (Nolan and Watson, 1999). A study of lone parents in the EU found that the average standard of living of lone parents is lower than two parents families and that they are far more likely to be living in poverty, 'whatever the measure of poverty used' (Roll, 1991).

Research has also found that the level of the experience of poverty varies within different subgroups of lone parents. Ford and Millar (1998) found that those lone parents that have never married were more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and to live in areas of social disadvantage. Separated lone parents were less likely to be linked with prior social disadvantage and their poverty and housing difficulties are the result of the relationship rather than prior background.

[3] The 60% poverty line refers to households whose income does not exceed 60 per cent of average income, adjusted for family size and composition.

In terms of employment history, over 90 per cent of unmarried lone parent households received 80 per cent of more of their gross income from social welfare payments (McCashin, 1996). Over half of those women interviewed by Richardson (2000) were working part-time, one woman full time and the remainder were unemployed. While some mothers were reluctant to use childcare outside of the family circle, many wished to work but were unable to due to inadequate childcare facilities and the need to travel outside of their local areas to find work. McCashin's study (1996) of the employment aspects of lone parenthood identifies that the broad educational profile of all one parent families parallels with that of the long term unemployed. Overall, there are several factors impeding lone parent's participation in the workforce, including low wages, the welfare poverty trap and a lack of affordable childcare (Shelter, 1997). UK research has also shown that lone parents tend to suffer from a lack of qualifications and training (Bryson et al, 1997).

There are particular issues for lone parents in accessing and retaining housing (NESF, 2001; Memery & Kerrins, 2002). In relation to the housing careers of lone parent families[4], those lone parents in the later life cycle phases tend to be owner occupiers, while younger lone parents tend to rely on rental accommodation, both local authority and private rented[5]. There is also evidence of an increasing reliance on the Supplementary Welfare Allowance to support lone parents in the private rented sector (McCashin, 1996: 33).

Total housing deprivation i.e. homelessness, is also experienced by lone parent families. In 1999 in Dublin, 476 out of total of 1,202 household (40 per cent) placed in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation by health boards were lone parents (NESF, 2001: 39). The 2002 assessment of homelessness in the eastern regional health authority area found that 16% (n. 420) of <u>all</u> homeless households were headed by a single parent. The British housing advice agency, Shelter, found that nearly 60 per cent of the women who contacted them for help were either homeless or potentially homeless (Shelter 1997).

[4] In this case, 'lone parents' refers to those who are separated, divorced etc.
[5] Appendix A presents a summary of the main (though not exhaustive) tenure options for young lone parents in Dublin.

2.41 Public Perceptions (Myths) of Young Lone Parents

UK research has shown that there are myths regarding young lone parents, i.e. that they have children to access social welfare payments and housing. Speak (1999) notes that there are two assumptions that persist in the mythology surrounding young single parenthood. Firstly that the social housing system favours single parents over other families with children, and secondly that affordable independent accommodation is the greatest need of single parent and the answer to most of their problems. However research has disproved this and has highlighted issues such as the desired for independence, and the ability to care for their children as key concerns for young lone parents.

In terms of access to local authority housing, which is viewed as the most desired housing option for young lone parents, Richardson's study (2000) details the difficulties that respondents had in being allocated a dwelling within the desired time period and the treatment of young lone mothers by local authorities in the application and allocations process in the UK. Findings included:

- Young mothers commented on the lack of information about the process and being stereotyped as teenage mother;
- For those living at home, a policy of 'homeless at home' applies to lone parents, but the lone parent is not required to enter temporary accommodation. Some local authorities require families to furnish the lone parent with a notice to quit and then for the lone parent to move to temporary accommodation to receive priority for housing;
- For those who are homeless and require emergency accommodation, it was found that, depending on the stock available, the support needs of lone parents are taken into account in allocating temporary accommodation. However there were problems with this accommodation when it was run by councils as facilities and conditions were poor and families were sharing with other priority homeless categories that they did not know;
- Resettlement services for vulnerable tenants tended not to be available through local authorities and young mothers finding it hard to manage tenancies have few sources of help;

- The local authority housing that is allocated to lone parents is often unsuitable and overcrowding can occur. Waiting times for allocations and transfers to suitable housing can be long. Knowing that a move is imminent means that lone parent families can often find it hard to settle down; and
- Allocation decisions are usually based on stock availability rather than the social or medical needs of lone parent families. Young women reported the difficulties inherent in being moved away from families and support networks.

In summary, both national and international research shows young lone parents to be at high risk of poverty and to be therefore more likely to be dependent on social housing or private rented accommodation, than to be owner occupiers. This is evidenced in *normative* evaluations of their housing need (i.e. through local authority assessments) and in *expressed* housing need (in the private market).

The NESF (1995), in its role as advisor to the government, made specific recommendations on housing and lone parents including:

- Lone parents' particular accommodation needs in relation to social housing should be considered in the design, development and allocation by local authorities of a range of housing sizes and types that take account of the changing make-up of families;
- The review of the SWA reasonable rent limits which determine the maximum amount payable through the Rent Supplement should take account of rents charged in the markets;
- Provision should be made by local authorities within housing estates for community support facilities; and that
- The Private Residential Tenancies Board addresses the discrimination by some landlords against lone parents on Rent Supplement.

2.42 Other Support Needs of Young Lone Parents

Literature reviewed above has highlighted the relationship between young parenthood and lower educational qualifications and training and higher levels of unemployment., presenting many support needs. The recent evaluation of the Teen Parents Support Initiative notes, 'there is growing recognition that the provision of responsive and preventive programmes to young parents can provide additional forms of emotional support and can have short and long term benefits for both direct and indirect beneficiaries (O'Riordan, 2002:25).

2.5 Supporting young lone parents

Chapter five provides in-depth detail on the operation of models of best practice for housing support for young parents models in the UK. This section presents a definition of housing support and outlines some identified key factors of success in support models.

2.51 Defining housing support

There are a number of models of housing support for one-parent families varying from a continuum of low to high support. These supports can range from support from key workers within a community context to high support housing facilities. However the issue of housing support is wider than just support to facilitate lone parents in accessing and remaining within their accommodation. Educational and employment supports also emerge as important to the support equation, alongside parenting and personal supports.

The UK government has introduced the *Supporting People*[6] programme to provide housing support to a wide range of vulnerable people. The definition of housing support adopted by the enabling legislation is:

> Housing support services include any service which provides support, assistance, advice or counselling to an individual with particular needs with a view to

[6] This policy is applicable across the UK, with the Scottish Executive implementing it in their area. The policy is designed to focus on local needs, improve the quality and range of services, integrate housing support with wider local strategies, monitoring quality and effectiveness and introducing effective decision making and administration (Scottish Executive (2002), Supporting People, Consultation Paper 7)

enabling that individual to occupy, or continue to occupy, as the person's sole or main residence, residential accommodation (Scottish Executive, 2002).

2.52 Providers of Support

While previous sections have discussed housing needs and options, there are also support services that can be available to young lone parents on a formal and informal basis. These include:

- Family
- Social and peer networks
- Statutory services;
- Voluntary/Community Sector services; and
- Multi-agency working, often within different sectors.

The services provided by governmental and non-governmental agencies range within a continuum form high to low support; from a community based key worker in contact with young lone parents to a high support residential arrangement where a range of services are provided.

2.53 Supporting Young Lone Parents in Housing: Models and Best Practice

The UK has seen a growth in housing and support services aimed at young people, largely provided by the voluntary sector. Research conducted by the National Council for One Parent Families in the UK sought the views of lone parents on the issue of supported housing for those unable to live with their own families and who are either too young or too vulnerable to cope with tenancies of their own. The aims of these supported housing projects are to provide housing and varying levels of support on a temporary basis, and to prepare young women for independent living. The research found that:

- Half of the 68 housing authorities in London had no specialist provision.

- Most projects target young mothers with average stays of 6 to 18 months. There was negative imagery for young mothers with traditional mother and baby hostels but those who had experienced them were more positive.
- A range of accommodation was available, from individual bed-sits with shared facilities and staff on site, to self contained accommodation where young women can live independently.
- The support provided differed with some projects trying to encourage independence with the emphasis on housing management, while others provided a more comprehensive in-house support by way of living skills, parenting skills, and education and training.
- Some encouraged relationships with the fathers while others would allow men on the premises or had restricted access.

A Mid Western Health Board report also made particular recommendations in relation to supported transitional housing for young mothers. Firstly, the provision of short terms aftercare residential accommodation throughout the mid west region for young mothers and children who are without family support whilst they adjust to motherhood and reintegrate into their community. Also the provision of short-term high support accommodation for teenage mothers who have a history of complex problems where there are definite potential risks in terms of whether they can manage their babies.

In the UK research by NCOPF in 2000 young women identified the basic principles for providing residential supported housing.

Principles of Supported Housing (as identified by young lone mothers in the UK)

Principle 1: Continuity
Many women have to make the transition to motherhood in mobile and insecure circumstances, which generates anxiety. Permanence needs to be established quickly.
Principle 2: Choice
This involves individually tailored support packages and needs that are not necessarily based on the mothers age. A variety of models of housing and of support are required.
Principle 3: Having your own space
There is an association between having your own space and being settled, independent and in control. When projects offer shared facilities and little privacy, it is very difficult for the young parent. There needs to be a balance between independence and support.

Key support needs as identified by the young women in the same study are:

- parenting skills and information on child development;
- managing on a low income;
- social and emotional support;
- access to training and education;
- affordable childcare; and
- resettlement.

2.54 Models of housing support for young lone parents

The same NCOPF research identified a number of housing support models available in the UK, such as:

- Mother and baby provision
- Foster care
- Foyers (there is some concern about the lack of permanence of this model)[7]
- Floating support models where self-contained accommodation is supported by flexible and consistent support form on individual or a one stop shop service tailored to individual needs (this was the preferred model in NCOPF research)

2.55 Relationship with Local Authorities

For those lone parents in supported transitional housing in the UK, there were a range of experiences in dealing with housing authorities. UK research found that when the support providers worked well in partnership with housing authorities this ensured a smooth transition from the project to more permanent accommodation. Other supported housing providers were fighting to ensure that residents were not moved to temporary accommodation and delays in housing were seen as detrimental to the young persons ability to manage independently. Some of the supported housing providers provided a resettlement service, others not, and the length of this support varied.

[7] The Proposed Urban White Paper, prepared by the UK Foyer Federation in January 2000, describes a foyer as an, 'innovative, locally-based project offering an integrated service for homeless and disadvantaged young people.'

Chapter Three: An Overview of the Policy Context for Social and Supported Housing Provision

3.1 The Family and Social and Housing Policy

Family policy refers to any policy measure which has consequences, intended or not, on families (Kiely, 1999). Recent efforts have been made to facilitate the development of an integrated family policy in Ireland, which up to recently did not exist. One example of this is the Family Research Unit in the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which emerged as a recommendation from the Strengthening Families for Life report.

Despite this, there are still no specific national housing policies targeted at lone parents. The housing needs of lone parents in Ireland, of all ages, are generally met through the housing options available to the general population. As noted above, due to the high proportion of lone parents living in poverty, the dominant housing option in Ireland (i.e. owner occupation) is generally not a realistic option for this group.

The creation of the Irish housing system as a market dominated model, resulting in the encouragement and support of home ownership, and the residualisation of other tenures, especially social housing, has been much commented on (Drudy and Punch, 2002; Fahey, 1999). The social exclusionary outcomes of this policy has also been noted (Fahey, 2001; Drudy and Punch, 2002). The residualisation of local authority housing has left the authorities as housers of last resort for those that cannot afford to purchase accommodation, such as young lone parents. The SDCC Housing Strategy notes that almost 81 per cent of housing applicants have annual incomes of or less than £10,000 (€12,700) meaning that market led housing choices are not an option for many seeking homes in Tallaght.

Irish housing policy is set out in the DELG 1995 report, *Social Housing – The Way Ahead,* which describes its objective as being 'to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment, and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice.' Each local authority has

responsibility to implement this policy on a local level. With the passing of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, authorities were obliged to produce housing strategies. The Act also marked a move towards mixed tenure housing developments, with Part V of the act requiring that 15-20% of units in new residential units in each local authority be social/affordable units.

Guidelines on Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, which were issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in December 2000, made the following (among others) recommendations:

- provision of social housing need within each planning authority's functional area must be informed by and fully reflect the most recent assessment of need for housing accommodation carried out under Section 9 of the Housing Act, 1988;
- the planning authority must also ensure that the estimated future social and affordable housing needs of the community are provided for in the housing strategy;
- the planning authority should consider the mix of house types and sizes to be provided for social housing purposes and must ensure that the needs of smaller households are catered for;
- planning authorities should take a pro-active role in facilitating the involvement of the voluntary housing sector and the co-operative housing sector in providing housing on land or sites earmarked for transfer by developers for social housing.

3.2 Social Housing Provision in SDCC: The Housing Strategy

There is a very high demand for social housing in the SDCC region. The South Dublin County Council Housing Strategy (2001-2005) states that, 'almost 81% of South Dublin's housing applicants have estimated gross incomes of less than £10,000 per annum.'[8] The Strategy sets out the provision of the following over the Strategy period:

- 1,700 local authority dwellings;
- 1,200 social housing units through the voluntary and co-operative housing sectors;
- 600 shared ownership/affordable housing units;

[8] A Housing Strategy Unit was established in the SDCC in September 2001 to implement measures set put in the Housing Strategy.

- 1,571 social/affordable housing units by developers, 'pursuant to the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act;
- that 15% of new residential developments be social/affordable units.

The Strategy also notes that a key housing priority of the Plan will be to 'increase social housing output in accordance with increased needs.' This would encompass:

- an increase in the local authority housing programme,
- the expansion of voluntary housing activity,
- the provision by local authorities of affordable housing, and
- the continuation of the shared ownership scheme.

However, it remains that even with the above provision of social housing, existing and additional demand over the strategy period will not be met. In South Dublin, it is estimated that the waiting list at the end of the five years (i.e. in 2005) will be 5,915, which is an increase of 2,400 from the 2001 figure. Threshold's 2002 analysis of housing strategies found that among 16 authorities which projected the number of additional households expected to qualify for social housing during the course of their strategy, South Dublin was one of only three in which projected new social need outpaces supply (Threshold, 2001: 59).

This shortfall in social housing in not unique to SDCC, but rather is a feature of social housing provision and demand throughout the country. In relation to this, Threshold's report stated,

> The housing strategies indicate that there will be a persistent social housing shortage nationally despite the increased rate of provision that began at the turn of the century. Questions about the accuracy of the existing waiting list counts as a measure of need and about the projections of additional social need and supply might argue for smaller gaps between need and supply than a simple reading of the strategies would indicate. However the inaccuracies would have to be very large indeed to alleviate concern (Threshold, 2001: 62).

3.3 The Role of the Voluntary Sector

The Government document "Action on Housing", issued in June 2000 proposes to increase the funding available to approved housing bodies for site acquisition. In relation to the role of the voluntary sector in the provision of social housing the SDCC housing strategy states, 'these organisations have in recent times been making an increasingly significant and valuable contribution to social housing needs by the provision of housing, which accommodates applicants from local authority housing lists. The Government intends to explore with these organisations ways of expanding their programmes. …The Council will continue to assist approved voluntary housing bodies in every way possible in order to maximise housing output from this sector. '

Importantly, the Strategy states that it is anticipated that, 'of the order of 1,200 social housing units will be provided (via the voluntary sector) over the period of the plan'. The expected location and management of these housing units is summarised in the table below. It shows that a total of 350 social housing units within Tallaght are to be allocated to the voluntary housing association sector by voluntary bodies, 'to be determined' within the Strategy period.

Table 3.41 *Proposed Social Housing Output by the Voluntary Sector 2001-2005*

Voluntary Body	Location	Number of units
NABCO	Brookview, Tallaght	58
RESPOND	Brookview, Tallaght	51
SONAS	Kilcronan, Clondalkin	10
St. Pancras	Kiltalown, Tallaght	40
St. Pancras	Kilcronan, Clondalkin	70
To be Determined	**Tallaght – Other Sites**	**350**
To be Determined	Clondalkin – Other Sites	300
To be Determined	Lucan – Other Sites	170
To be Determined	Various small sites in County	150

3.4 An Overview of Policy and Procedures in the Allocation of SDCC Housing

The (Housing) Allocations section in South Dublin County Council has responsibility for:

- Processing of applications for housing accommodation and the allocation to tenants of new lettings and casual vacancies;
- Maintenance of the Housing List;
- Processing of applications for transfers. There are a number of different transfers for which an existing tenant of the Council may apply as follows:
  - Transfer to alternative accommodation;
  - Mutual transfer with another tenant of the Council;
  - Transfer of tenancy;
- Processing of applications for overall priority as homeless;
- Investigation of complaints in relation to anti-social behaviour and vetting of prospective tenants.

The principal source for the following information is the SDCC website (page: http://www.sdublincoco.ie/index.aspx?pageid=84&deptid=7&pageno=2)

3.41 Scheme of Letting Priorities

The Scheme of Letting Priorities is a significant policy document pertaining allocation of housing. Housing are allocated in accordance with this scheme, which was adopted by the SDCC in November 1998. Part II of the Scheme sets out in detail various headings under which applicants are awarded points. Points are awarded on the following basis:

- Information provided by the applicants regarding their current accommodation, their income and other relevant matters relating to their circumstances;
- Deliberation by the Chief Medical Officer, who adjudicates on medical letters submitted in support of applications;
- Report of the Environmental Health Officer on applicant's current living conditions.

Recent significant amendments to the scheme include:

- *Income Qualification:* if an applicants income exceeds the maximum to be eligible for a house purchase loan, they do not qualify to be included on the housing list;
- *Local Residency Points:* an extra 5 points are awarded to applicants seeking housing in the area where they currently reside;

- *Persons with permission to reside in the State*: up to 10% of appropriate accommodation becoming available in one year may be allocated to this category of applicant.
- *Time on the Housing List*: the number of points awarded under this heading have been increased significantly to reward those who have been waiting for housing the longest.

3.42 The Housing List

The Housing List is updated and published every three months. The List is broken down into those applicants who have applied for one, two, three and four bedroom accommodation. It gives each person's placing on the List, the address from which they have applied, the family composition and the points awarded to them.

3.43 Tenancy Agreements

The SDCC website provides the following overview of tenancy agreements: 'Applicants are appointed tenants of Council houses by Manager's Order and are required to sign a Tenancy Agreement. This is an important legal document which sets out the terms and conditions of the Tenancy and as such is a contract between the Council and the tenant/s. Compliance with a Tenancy Agreement is vital in that the Council can subsequently refuse to sell a house to a tenant under the Tenant Purchase scheme where there has been a breach of the agreement and this can also endanger eligibility for a mortgage allowance applicant as purchaser of a private house. Failure to comply with the terms of a Tenancy Agreement in full can also impact on a tenant's eligibility for a transfer to alternative accommodation etc. The Tenancy Agreement places a strong emphasis on the conduct of tenants and the use of dwellings for unlawful purposes' (www.sdcc.ie)

3.44 Transfers

An application for an ordinary transfer involves a tenant applying for a transfer without specifying any particular house. Tenants may specify the area or estate. Accepted reasons for applying for a transfer include medical grounds, or on grounds of overcrowding. In

the former case, medical evidence must be supplied and assessed by the Chief Medical Officer who calls to the Council on a regular basis.

An inter-transfer or "Mutual Inter-change of Tenancies" involves two tenants applying to swap houses. It is noted that this is usually a quicker process since there is no need to identify a suitable dwelling. In order to quality for a mutual inter-transfer, rent account of both tenants must be clear, both houses must be maintained to an adequate standard and most importantly accommodation must meet the applicants needs.

Any transfer application will only be considered where:

- Tenants have maintained their houses in good condition;
- Tenants have a clear rent account (may be waived on exceptional compassionate grounds.) Any outstanding water charges must also be cleared;
- Tenants have no record of anti-social behaviour.

3.5 Homelessness: National Policy and South Dublin County Council

In order to ensure an effective response to homelessness the Cross Department Team on Homelessness under the aegis of the Department of Environment and Local Government in "Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy" contains the following proposals:-

- Local Authorities and Health Boards to draw up action plans for the delivery of services to homeless persons, by both statutory and voluntary agencies on a county basis.
- Local Authorities will have responsibility for the provision of accommodation for homeless persons including hostel emergency/accommodation as part of their overall housing responsibility. Health Boards will be responsible for the health and in house needs of homeless persons.
- Local homeless persons centres will be established jointly by local authorities and health boards in consultation with the voluntary bodies, throughout the county. The service provided will be enlarged to involve a full assessment of homeless persons' needs and to refer persons to other health and welfare services.

- Action plan to be prepared within three years for those assessed as "homeless". Local Authorities to provide a certain proportion of their lettings of suitable new or existing housing units to allow hostel residents to move into either a sheltered or independent housing environment. In this regard, the need for sheltered housing facilities and the extent to which they may be required will need to be examined by each Local Authority in the context of preparing an action plan.

Under the SDCC's Scheme of Priorities for Letting Housing Accommodation, homeless persons are awarded priority for housing accommodation as provided for in the Housing Act, 1988. Currently, the Strategy notes that, 'most homeless families are currently on average a minimum of six months in Bed & Breakfast accommodation before they can be made an offer of permanent accommodation.' However, the paper does on to note that as accommodation is offered to families in order of reporting, a noted decline in the number of casual vacancies obtained will result in this 'waiting' period lengthening, an expectation reflected in the experiences of young lone parents interviewed for this research (see chapter four for further detail).

The document, *Shaping the Future – An Action Plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2001-2003* outlines the level of homeless accommodation provision within each Dublin local authority over the period. Table 3.41 below presents a summary of homeless accommodation to be provided here. It shows that 30 transitional housing units are to be provided.

Table 3.41 *Homeless Accommodation to be provided by SDCC within Strategy Period*

Homeless Accommodation Type	Number and Types of Units
Emergency Accommodation	▪ 12 units for families ▪ 16 units for younger people (including some provision for active drug users) ▪ 10 units for older people ▪ Refuge for 6 families
Transitional Housing	▪ 30 units
Transitional Units for Women moving from emergency refuges	▪ 6 units

The SDCC housing strategy states that this will be provided, ‘in conjunction with the various voluntary housing bodies with expertise in this area’. It also notes that should this number and type of units proposed prove not to meet the demand, additional units will be provided during the period of this strategy.

Chapter Four: Analysis of the Community Survey

4.1 Introduction

A total of 300 questionnaires, enclosed with an individual cover letter and stamped addressed envelope, were distributed to various relevant community services, as outlined in the introduction. Within a six week response period, 49 completed questionnaires were returned, one of which was invalid as the respondent was over 25 years of age. These data were entered and analysed in the statistical analysis package, SPSS, and the results of an in-depth analysis are provided below. This includes demographic detail (such as age, number of children and income sources), current housing situation, current and past housing needs and perceived barriers to accessing preferred housing, issues around single parenthood and accessing housing and finally, identified support needs. Where applicable, the response 'missing' refers to a non response from respondents.

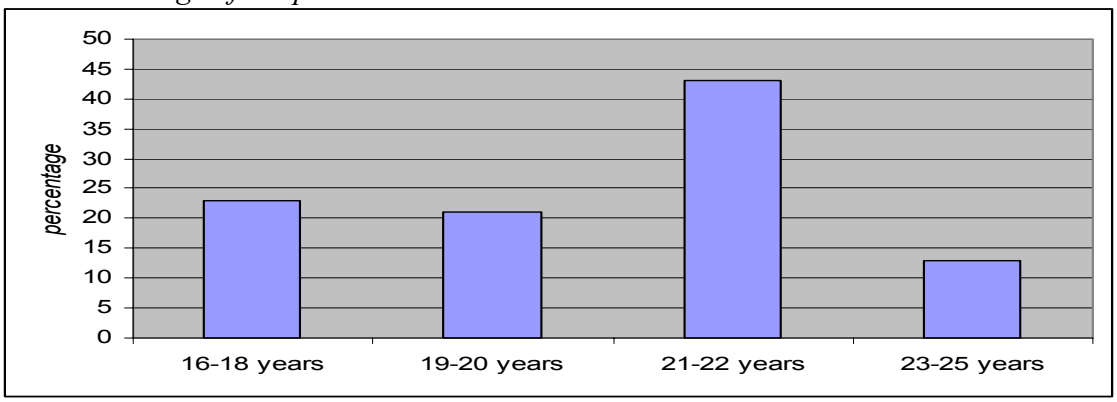
4.2 Background Data

Table 3.21 shows that over two fifths (n. 20) of respondents were aged between 21 to 22 years. A further 44 per cent were broken evenly into the age groups of 16-18 years and 19-20 years, and a remaining 13 per cent (n. 6) were in the latter age group of 23-25 years.

Table 4.21 *Age of Respondents*

Age Group	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
16-18 years	11	23
19-20 years	10	21
21-22 years	20	43
23-25 years	6	13
Total	47	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	48	

Chart 4.21 *Age of Respondents*



In the question relating to income sources, respondents were invited to note all sources that applied to them, and for this reason these data, as summarised in Table 3.22, does not amount to a total of 100%. We can see that the overwhelmingly prevalent income source was the Lone Parent Family Payment, which was received by 90 per cent (n. 43). 14 percent received rent allowance from the local health board, and eight per cent (n. 4) received maintenance payments from an (ex) partner. Only one respondent was working full time and a further three worked on a part time basis.

Table 4.23 *Income Sources*

Income Source	Number	Percentage
Working Full Time	1	2
Working Part Time	3	6
FAS CE Scheme	3	6
One Parent Family Payment	43	90
Maintenance from (ex) partner	4	8
Rent Allowance (from HB)	7	14
Unemployment Benefit	1	2

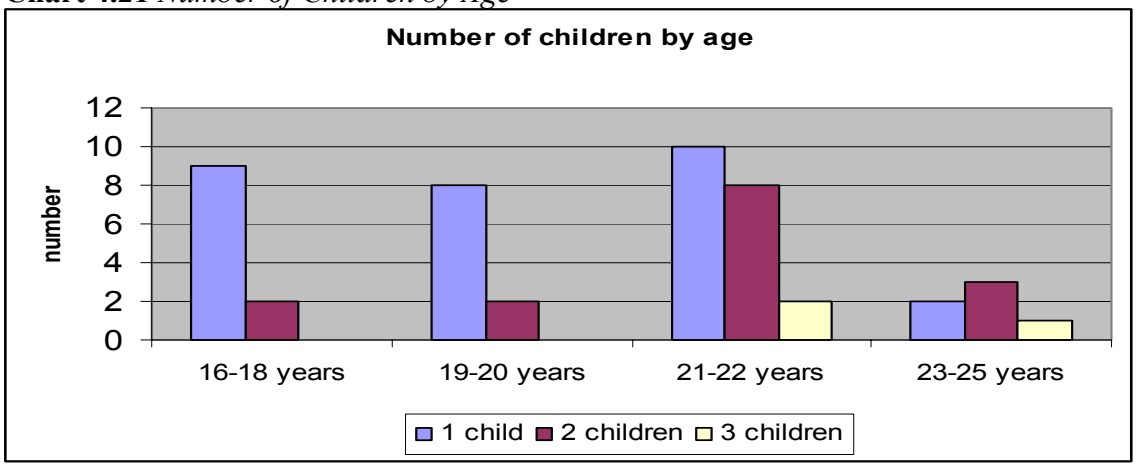
Table 3.24 below presents the age of respondents, cross analysed by their number of children. The majority of respondents (60%) had one child, and of these, almost all were distributed relatively evenly between the first three age categories of 16-18 years, 19-20 years and 21-22 years, at 31 percent, 27.6 per cent and 34.5 per cent, respectively. Among those who have two children, over 73 per cent were aged between 21 and 25 years. All three respondents who had three children were also in this age group.

Table 4.24 *Age by Number of Children**

Number of children	*16-18 years*	*19-20 years*	*21-22 years*	*23-25 years*	*Total*
One	9	8	10	2	29
	31.0%	27.6%	34.5%	6.9%	100.0%
Two	2	2	8	3	15
	13.3%	13.3%	53.3%	20.0%	100.0%
Three	0	0	2	1	3
			66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	11	10	20	6	47
	22.9%	20.8%	41.7%	12.5%	100.0%

* Totals 47 rather than 48 as one age response is missing.

Chart 4.21 *Number of Children by Age*



No respondents reported ever being married (see table 3.25 below). However, there was a high rate of non response to this question, at 15, 31 per cent of all respondents.

Table 4.25 *Have you ever been married?*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
No	33	100.0
Missing	15	
Total	48	

In summary, the majority of respondents are aged 22 years or under, have one child and have never been married. Their main form of income is the One Parent Family Payment.

4.3 Current Housing Situation

Table 3.31 outlines current housing circumstances of respondents. It shows that the majority, almost one half, at 46 per cent (n. 22), are living with their parents. Other common circumstances are renting from the county council, at 29 per cent (n. 14) and renting from a private landlord, at 17 per cent (n. 8). One respondent described themselves as homeless. However, another respondent, who stated that they were sharing with other family members in their home, could also be described as being homeless.

Table 4.31 *Current Housing Situation*

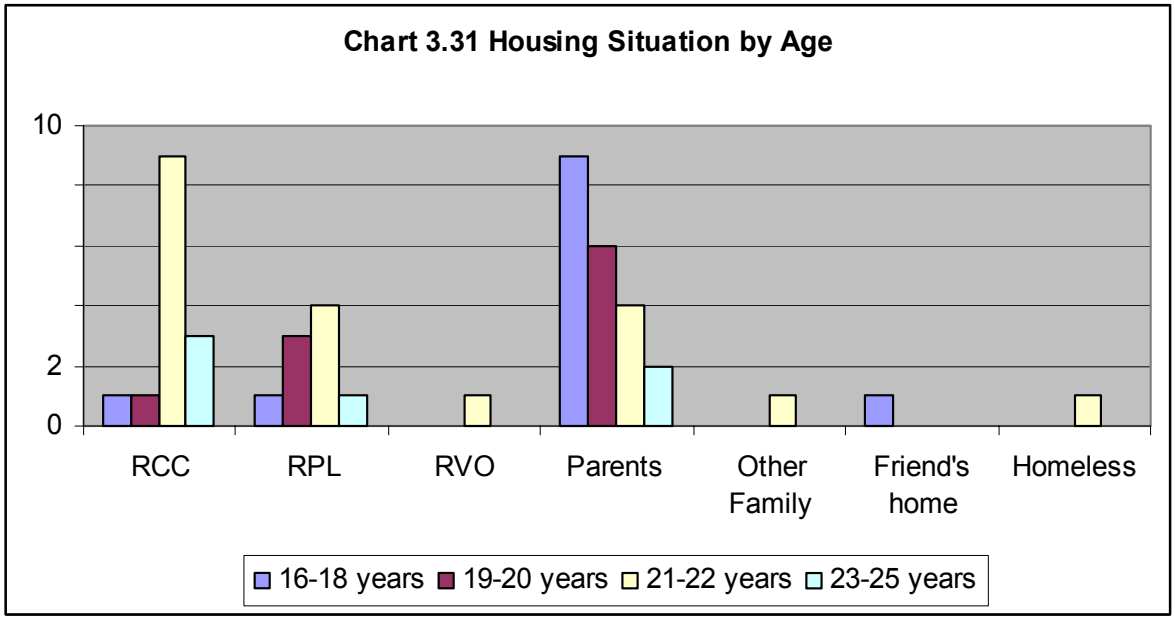
Housing	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Renting from the County Council	14	29.2
Renting from a private landlord	8	16.7
Renting from a voluntary organisation	1	2.1
Living with parents	22	45.8
Sharing with other family members in their home	1	2.1
Sharing with friends in their home	1	2.1
Living in homeless hostel/B&B	1	2.1
Total	**48**	**100.0**

When cross analysed by age, it emerged that just under 86 per cent (n. 12) of those aged over 21 years were renting housing from the county council, whereas for those living with their parents, 71.5 per cent (n. 15) were aged between 16 and 20 years, a relationship with statistical significance (see table 3.32). This relationship is represented in Chart 3.31.

Table 4.32 *Housing Situation by Age*

Current Housing Situation	**16-18 years**	**19-20 years**	**21-22 years**	**23-25 years**	**Total**
Renting from the County Council	1 7.1%	1 7.1%	9 64.3%	3 21.4%	14 100.0%
Renting from a private landlord		3 37.5%	4 50.0%	1 12.5%	8 100.0%
Renting from a voluntary organisation			1 100.0%		1 100.0%
Living with parents	9 42.9%	6 28.6%	4 19.0%	2 9.5%	21 100.0%

Sharing with other family members in their home			1 100.0%		1 100.0%
Sharing with friends in their home	1 100.0%				1 100.0%
Living in homeless hostel/B&B			1 100.0%		1 100.0%
TOTAL	**11 22.9%**	**10 20.8%**	**20 41.7%**	**6 12.5%**	**48 100.0%**



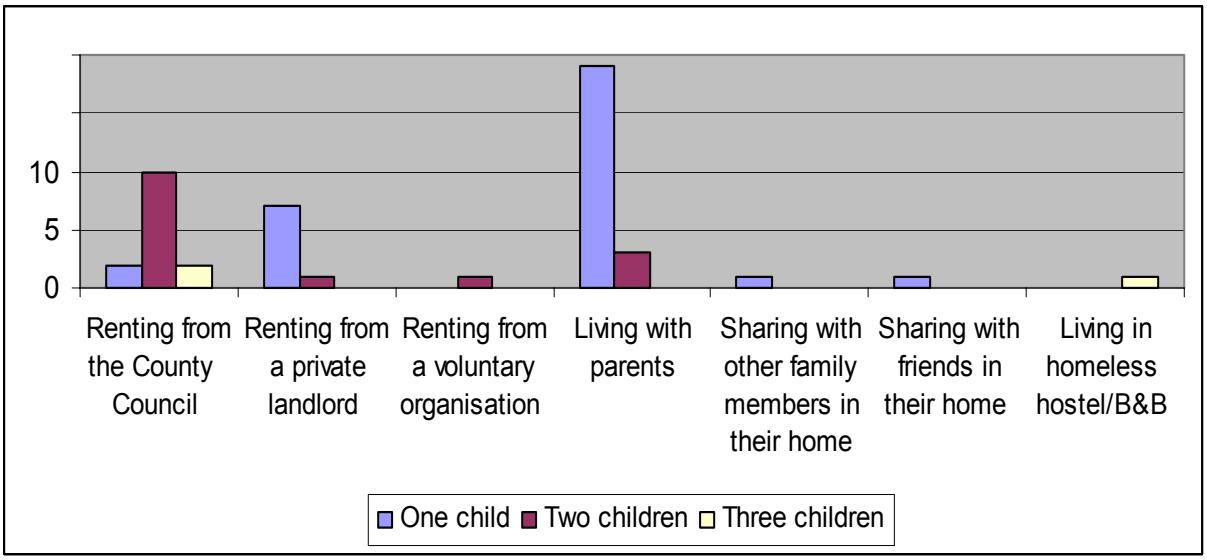
RCC = Renting from the County Council
RPL = Renting from a Private Landlord
RVO = Renting from a Voluntary Organisation

A cross analysis of number of children by current housing situation shows that the majority of respondents with one child are either renting from a private landlord, at 23.3 per cent (n. 7) or living with their parents, at 63.3 per cent (n. 19). Two thirds of those with two children (n. 10) are renting from the County Council, as are two thirds of those with three children (n. 2). This is a statistically significant relationship.

Table 4.32 *Housing Situation by number of children*

Current Housing Situation	*One child*	*Two children*	*Three children*	*Total*
Renting from the County Council	2 6.7%	10 66.7%	2 66.7%	14 29.2%
Renting from a private landlord	7 23.3%	1 6.7%	0	8 16.7%
Renting from a voluntary organisation	0	1 6.7%	0	1 2.1%
Living with parents	19 63.3%	3 20%	0	22 45.8%
Sharing with other family members in their home	1 3.3%	0	0	1 2.1%
Sharing with friends in their home	1 3.3%	0	0	1 2.1%
Living in homeless hostel/B&B	0	0	1 33.3%	1 2.1%
Total	**30** **100%**	**15** **100%**	**3** **100%**	**48** **100%**

Chart 4.32 *Housing Situation by Number of Children*



Over two fifths of respondents (n. 40) lived in a three bedroom house. Six per cent (n. 4) lived in a two bedroom house. This reflects the nature of housing type available in Tallaght, which is predominantly two and three bedroom housing (see table 3.33 below).

Table 4.33 *Current Housing Type*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
2 bed house	2	4.2
3 bed house	40	83.3
4 bed house	3	6.3
1 bed flat/apartment	1	2.1
2 bed flat/apartment	1	2.1
bed and breakfast	1	2.1
Total	**48**	**100.0**

Respondents lived in all listed areas of Tallaght. Among those who stated, 'other' for their address (n. 7), a total of five provided local addresses, one was temporarily staying in a homeless hostel in the city centre and one provided no further detail. The two most prevalent areas were Jobstown and Killinarden, with just under 19 per cent (n. 9) of respondents living in each.

Table 4.34 *Area of Tallaght*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
Fettercairn	2	4.2
Jobstown	9	18.8
Killinarden	9	18.8
Springfield	4	8.3
Avonbeg	1	2.1
Brookfield	7	14.6
Kilnamanagh	1	2.1
Millbrook	3	6.3
Oldbawn	3	6.3
Tymon	2	4.2
Other	7	14.6
Total	**48**	**100.0**

4.4 Housing Need and Barriers to Accessing It

70 per cent (n. 33) of respondents said that their current housing was not the choice they would prefer, and further 8.5 per cent (n.4) said they did not know, leaving only 21.3 per cent (n. 10) who were satisfied with their current housing situation. The table below presents a cross analysis of housing situation by whether or not this was their preferred choice. It shows that within the most common housing circumstances (renting from the

council, renting from a private landlord and living with parents), renting from the county council was more popular than other options, with 57 per cent (n. 8) of this group expressing satisfaction with this. All of those renting from a private landlord (n. 8) said this was not their preferred option. Among those living with their parents, over three quarters, 76.2 per cent (n. 16) said this was not their preferred choice, a further 14.3 per cent (n. 3) said they did not know, and only 9.5 per cent (n. 2) said it was their preferred option. Among other housing situations listed, all respondents stated that it was not their preferred option (see table 3.41 below).

Table 4.41 *Is current housing preferred? by housing status*

Housing	*Yes*	*No*	*Don't Know*	*Total*
Renting from the County Council	8 57.1%	5 35.7%	1 7.1%	14 100.0%
Renting from a private landlord	0	8 100.0%	0	8 100.0%
Renting from a voluntary organisation	0	1 100.0%	0	1 100.0%
Living with parents	2 9.5%	16 76.2%	3 14.3%	21 100.0%
Sharing with other family members in their home	0	1 100.0%	0	1 100.0%
Sharing with friends in their home	0	1 100.0%	0	1 100.0%
Living in a homeless hostel/B&B	0	1 100.0%	0	1 100.0%
Total	10 21.3%	33 70.2%	4 8.5%	47 100.0%

When cross analysed by number of children, it emerges that there is a higher level of satisfaction among those with two children (46.7%) with their current housing situation than among those with one or three children. Among those with only one child, just under 80 per cent (n. 23) were dissatisfied with current housing, and among those with three children, all of them (n. 3) state that current housing was not their preferred choice. This is a statistically significant relationship. Again, this relates to the provision of appropriate housing stock for various household sizes.

Table 4.42 *Cross Analysis of whether current housing is preferred by number children*

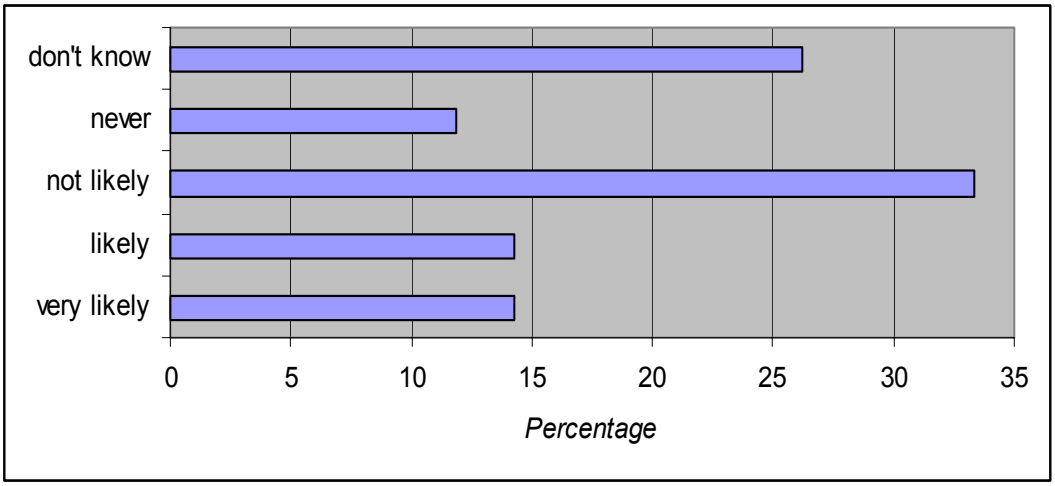
Number of children	*Prefer current housing choice?*			*Total*
	Yes	Don't know	No	
One	3	3	23	29
	10.3%	10.3	79.3%	100.0%
Two	7	1	7	15
	46.7%	6.7%	46.7%	100.0%
Three	0	0	3	3
			100.0%	100.0%
	10	**4**	**33**	**47**
Total	**21.3%**	**8.5%**	**70.2%**	**100.0%**

When asked how likely it was that they would access their preferred housing, one third responded with, 'not likely', and a further 12 per cent (n. 5) said 'never'. Over one quarter (26 per cent, n. 11) said they did not know, leaving only 29 per cent (n.12) who felt this was likely or very likely.

Table 4.43 *How likely do you think it is that you will live in your preferred housing?*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
very likely	6	14.3
likely	6	14.3
not likely	14	33.3
never	5	11.9
don't know	11	26.2
Total	**42**	**100.0**
Missing	6	
	48	

Chart 4.41 *Perceived likelihood of accessing preferred housing (in percentage)*



When this was cross analysed by age, it emerges that those aged between 16 and 20 years felt it less likely that they would access their preferred housing than those aged between 21 and 25 years. In the former age group, 58 per cent felt accessing their own home to be unlikely or that it would never happen, and a further 37 per cent (n. 7) said they did not know. Among those in the latter age group, however, over 25 per cent (n. 10) felt it was either likely or very likely that they would access their preferred housing (see table 3.44 below). This is a statistically significant relationship.

Table 4.44 *Perceived likelihood of accessing preferred by age*[9]

	Likelihood of living in preferred housing					
Age	**very likely**	**Likely**	**Not likely**	**Never**	**don't know**	***Total***
16-20 years	0	1 5.3%	10 52.6%	1 5.3%	7 36.8%	19 100.0%
21-25years	5 22.7%	5 22.7%	4 18.2%	4 18.2%	4 18.2%	22 100.0%
Total	**5** **12.2%**	**6** **14.6%**	**14** **34.1%**	**5** **12.2%**	**11** **26.8%**	**41** **100.0%**

Preferred housing choices ranged from buying a home to 'anything I can get'. The most popular option, at 55.3 per cent (n. 21) was renting a home from the county council. 18.4 per cent (n. 7) wanted to buy their own home, and 10.5 per cent (n. 4) stated they wished to buy their own home with the help of the council.

Table 4.45 *What is your preferred housing choice?*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
Renting from a private landlord	2	5.3
Buying you own home	7	18.4
Renting from the Council	21	55.3
Buying your rented home from the Council	1	2.6
Buy a home with the help of the Council	4	10.5
Anything I can get	3	7.9
Total	**38**	**100.0**
Missing	10	
	48	

[9] Age has been recoded here into two categories, to facilitate analysis.

When this is cross analysed by age, renting from the Council emerges as an equally popular option for both those aged between 16 and 20 years, and those aged from 21 to 25 years. However, we can also see that those in the older age category were more likely to identify measures such as buying your rented home from the council or buying a house with the help of the council. This suggests higher levels of awareness among this age group of housing options available, as well as differing housing circumstances (see table 3.46 below).

Table 4.46 *Preferred housing choice by age*

Housing Options	*Age*		
	16-20	**21-25**	**Total**
rent private	2	0	2
	11.1%		5.4%
own home	4	3	7
	22.2%	15.8%	18.9%
rent home from Council	10	11	21
	55.6%	57.9%	56.8%
buy rented house from Council		1	1
		5.3%	2.7%
buy home with help from Council		3	3
		15.8%	8.1%
Anything I can get	2	1	3
	11.1%	5.3%	8.1%
Total	**18**	**19**	**37**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**

In response to the question, why do you not think that you will live in your preferred housing, just under a half of respondents (n. 24) identified the length of the county council housing waiting lists. A quarter of respondents (n. 12) said that their income was too low and 20 per cent (n. 10) said childcare and housing costs contributed to barriers in accessing preferred housing. Difficulties in accessing private rented accommodation affected 30 per cent of the sample: 20 per cent (n. 10) related the cost of the private rented sector and a further 10 per cent (n. 5) related that some private landlords would not rent to them. 14 per cent (n. 7) felt that the allocation of Council housing worked to their disadvantage in terms of accessing preferred housing.

Table 4.47 *Why do you not think that you will live in your preferred housing?*

Reason	*Number*	*Percentage*
Income too low	12	25
Childcare and Housing Costs	10	20
Can't get name on CC housing list	2	4
Waiting List is too long	24	49
Allocation of Council housing	7	14
Cost of Private Rented Housing	10	20
Some private landlords won't rent to me	5	10
Parents want me to move out	4	8
Other	2	4

The biggest identified housing issue of respondents was overcrowding, which affected 39 per cent (n. 19) of the sample. Other significant housing issues include repairs and inadequate heating (affecting 21 and 22 per cent respectively), affording to pay the rent, which affected 20 per cent and wanting to move to another area of Tallaght, which affected 18 per cent (n. 9).

Table 4.48 *What are your biggest housing issues at the moment?*[10]

Biggest Housing Issues	*Number*	*Percentage*
Repairs needed to home	10	21
Inadequate heating	11	22
Overcrowding	19	39
Problems with neighbours	4	8
Can't afford to pay bills	7	14
Afford rent/mortgage	10	20
Notice to quit/eviction	2	4
Move to other area	6	12
Move to other area in Tallaght	9	18
Other	4	8

When asked if they wished to stay in Tallaght, just over 68 per cent said that they did. Only 8.5 per cent said they did not, yet a further 23.4 per cent (n. 11) said they did not know.

[10] Respondents were invited to respond to all issues that applied for them in this question; for that reason, the total response exceeds 100 per cent.

Table 4.49 *Do you wish to continue living in Tallaght?*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
yes	32	68.1
no	4	8.5
don't know	11	23.4
Total	**47**	**100.0**
Missing	1	
	48	

When asked if they wished to remain living in the same area of Tallaght, over 56 per cent (n. 27) said that they did. A high proportion, 29.2 per cent (n. 14) said they did not and a further 14.6 per cent (n. 7) said they did not know.

Table 3.49 *Do you wish to continue living in your area of Tallaght?*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
yes	27	56.3
no	14	29.2
don't know	7	14.6
Total	**48**	**100.0**

Out of 48 respondents, 34 (71%) said they either wanted to remain living in the same area of Tallaght, or that they did not know. When asked why they wished to remain in the same area of Tallaght, the most popular response was that the respondent's family lived in that area, stated by 66 per cent (n.22) of this subgroup. 47 per cent (n. 16) said they felt it was their home and 36 per cent (n. 12) said there friends lived in the area. Physical and structural properties of the area, such as the local school, play areas and general facilities emerged as less significant (see table 3.49 below).

Table 3.49 *Reasons for wishing to remain in same area of Tallaght*[11]

Reason	***Yes***	***Don't Know***	Total
Your family live in that area	20 61%	2 6%	22 (66%)
Your child(ren) like the school	5 15%	2 6%	7 (24%)
You like your house/flat	6 18%	1 3%	7 (21%)
You are close to shops/chemist etc.	8 24%	1 3%	9 (27%)
You feel that it is your home	13 38%	3 9%	16 (47%)
Your friends live in the area	10 30%	2 6%	12 (36%)
There are play areas for your children	5 15%	1 3%	6 (18%)
Other	3 9%	0	3 (9%)

4.5 Single Parenthood and Accessing Housing

A substantial proportion of the questionnaire was focused on the experiences of respondents in relation to becoming single parents, their housing situation at the time and specific difficulties they encountered in trying to access housing, as single parents. It emerged that the vast majority of respondents, 89.4 per cent (n. 42) said that they grew up in Tallaght (see table 3.51 below).

Table 4.51 *Did you grow up in Tallaght?*

	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
Yes	42	89.4
No	5	10.6
Total	**47**	**100.0**
Missing	1	
Total	49	

[11] Respondents were invited to respond to all reasons that applied for them in this question; for that reason, the total response exceeds 100 per cent.

Almost two thirds of respondents (n. 31) were aged between 16 and 18 years of age when they had their first child. Only 8.3 per cent (n. 4) were in the last age category of 21-23 years when they had their first child (see table 3.52 below).

Table 4.52 *What age were you when you had your first child?*

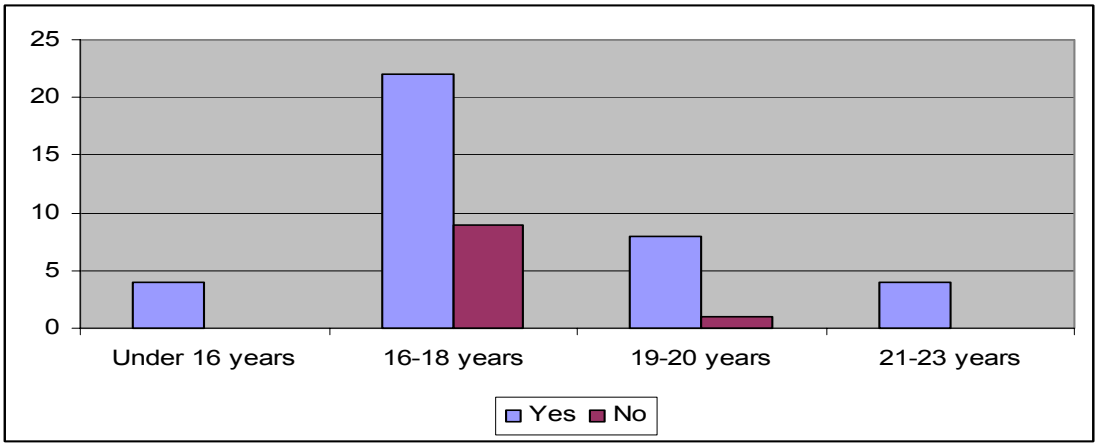
	Frequency	*Valid Percent*
under 16 years of age	4	8.3
16-18 years of age	31	64.6
19-20 years of age	9	18.8
21-23 years of age	4	8.3
Total	**48**	**100.0**

Just under four fifths (n. 38) had been living at home when they had their first child. Interestingly, when cross analysed with age of respondent when they had their first child, it emerges that the majority (n.10) who had not been living at home were in the second youngest age category, of 16 to 18 years (see table 3.53 below).

Table 4.53 *Whether respondents were living at home when had first child by age when had first child.*

	Were you living at home when you had your first child?		
	Yes	**no**	*Total*
Under 16 years of age	4 100.0%		4 100%
16-18 years of age	22 71%	9 29%	31 100%
19-20 years of age	8 88.9%	1 11.1%	9 100%
21-23 years of age	4 100%	0	4 100%
Total	**38 (79.2%)**	**10 (20.8%)**	**48**

Chart 4.51 *Living with parents when became pregnant, by age when became pregnant*



Respondents were asked to describe any problems they had in finding a home on becoming a single parent. The biggest problem, noted by 45 per cent (n. 22) of respondents was being accepted onto the County Council housing waiting list. Other difficulties experienced by a high proportion of respondents included pressure from their family or parents to leave their home, which was noted by 37 per cent (n. 18) and finding a private landlord who rent to them, also noted by 37 per cent.

31 per cent (n. 15) had difficulty in accessing a deposit and first month's payment to rent privately. 29 per cent (n. 14) described, 'getting information on how the Council make their decisions on renting homes' as a difficulty also.

Table 4.53 *Problems in finding a home on becoming a single parent*[12]

Problem	*Number*	*Percentage*
Your family/parents asking you to leave	18	37
Homelessness	6	12
Getting onto the Council housing list	22	45
Getting information on how the Council make their decisions on renting homes	14	29
Having to be homeless to get a Council home	5	10
Finding a private landlord that will rent to you	18	37
Getting a deposit and first month's rent to rent privately	15	31
Approval for a mortgage	3	6
Approval for local authority loan/scheme	1	2

[12] Respondents were invited to respond to all difficulties that applied for them in this question; for that reason, the total response exceeds 100 per cent.

In terms of past housing difficulties, respondents noted their experience of a range of related issues. Almost two fifths, 37 per cent (n. 18) had experienced overcrowding. 30 per cent (n. 15) had experienced difficulty in affording their rent or mortgage. 29 per cent had needed repairs to their home and 23 per cent had inadequate heating. 10 per cent had experienced difficulties with their neighbours. 18 per cent had experienced difficulties in paying bills. And finally, four respondents, which is eight per cent of the sample, had experienced an eviction or notice to quit.

Table 4.54 *Difficulties with any of these housing related issues in the past*[13]

Issues	*Number*	*Percentage*
Affording the rent/mortgage	15	30
Repairs to your home	14	29
Inadequate heating	11	23
Overcrowding	18	37
Problems with neighbours	5	10
Can't always afford to pay bills	9	18
Notice to quit/eviction	4	8
Other	2	4

4.6 Support

Table 3.61 below shows a range of housing related supports respondents felt they would have found helpful in the past, cross analysed by age. The first option that was most popular here was access to housing, 'for a year or two while sorting permanent housing.' This was identified as a support that would have been useful to them in the past by 45.8 per cent (n.22) of all respondents. This was most popular among those aged 21-22 years. A second popular option here was 'someone to explain all the housing options to me,' identified by 45.8 per cent also. Just under 42 per cent (n. 20) identified 'help applying for a Council home.'

The option, 'temporary housing as can't stay at home', emerged as a more relevant support for those aged between 21 and 25 years than the younger age groups, with 71 per cent of those who identified this support being in this age group. Only one respondent noted that the provision of a hostel would have been a useful support for them in the past.

Table 4.61 *Supports that would have been useful in the past, by age.*

	16-18 years	**19-20 years**	**21-22 years**	**23-25 years**	*Total*
▪ housing for year or two while sorting permanent housing	5 22.7%	5 22.7%	9 40.9%	3 13.6%	22 100% *of total:45.8%*
▪ temporary housing as can't stay at home	2 14.3%	2 14.3%	6 42.9%	4 28.6%	14 100% *of total:29.2%*
▪ help applying for Council home	5 25.0%	6 30.0%	5 25.0%	4 20.0%	20 100% *of total: 41.6%*
▪ Help renting from private landlord	4 23.5%	3 17.6%	6 35.3%	4 23.5%	17 100%
▪ Help with buying a home	0	1 33%	1 33%	1 33%	3 100% *of total: 6.3%*
▪ someone to explain housing options to me	5 22.7%	6 27.3%	6 27.3%	5 22.7%	22 100% *of total: 45.8%*
▪ Hostel	0	1 100%	0	0	1 100% *of total: 2.1%*
▪ Other	0	0	1 100%	0	1 100% *of total: 2.1%*

In terms of supports that respondents would find helpful now, over 56 per cent (n. 27) said they would find advice of social welfare and housing benefits useful. Just under 42 per cent (n. 20) said they would benefit from information and advice on housing options. Over two thirds (n. 18) also said they would benefit from money advice and help to budget. 25 per cent (n. 12) identified supported housing as a positive support option. 31 per cent said they would find help in finding a new home useful. Table below reveals that there is no significant difference between response to the type of support and age.

[13] Respondents were invited to respond to all issues that applied for them in this question; for that reason, the total response exceeds 100 per cent.

Table 4.62 *Supports and services you would find helpful now by age*

Support Options	*What age are you now?*				
	16-18 years	*19-20 years*	*21-22 years*	*23-25 years*	*Total*
▪ Supported Housing	4 33%	2 17%	3 25%	3 25%	**12** 100% ***of total: 25%***
▪ Money Advice and Help to budget	5 28%	2 11%	8 44%	3 17%	**18** 100% ***of total: 37.5%***
▪ Information/advice on housing options	7 35%	4 20%	5 25%	4 20%	**20** 100% ***of total: 41.6%***
▪ Help with finding a new home	3 20%	4 27%	5 33%	3 20%	**15** 100% ***of total: 31.3%***
▪ Finding affordable furniture and household goods	4 22%	4 22%	6 33%	4 22%	**18** 100% ***of total: 37.5%***
▪ Advice on social welfare and housing benefits	7 26%	5 18.5%	11 41%	3 11%	**27** 100% ***of total:56.3%***
▪ A family support worker	1 10%	2 20%	5 50%	2 2%	**10** 100% ***of total: 21%***
▪ A drop in centre	1 8%	3 25%	5 42%	3 25%	**12** 100% ***of total: 25%***

Level of awareness of available housing options varied. While almost all respondents, 96 per cent (n. 46) expressed awareness of renting a house from the Council, only 41 per cent (n. 20) were aware of the option of home ownership through a private mortgage. 78 per cent expressed awareness of the option of renting through a private landlord. Awareness of specific Council housing schemes also varied. Knowledge of some schemes was quite low, for example only three respondents were aware of the option of Improvement works in lieu of Local Authority Housing. Knowledge of the Affordable Housing Scheme and the Mortgage Allowance Scheme was at 29 and 31 per cent respectively, while just under two thirds, 63 per cent (n. 31), were aware of the Shared Ownership Scheme (see table 3.63 for more detail).

Lack of awareness among significant proportions of the sample of housing options such as home ownership and even, to a lesser extent, the private rented sector raises some confusion. It may be that some respondents misinterpreted this question. However, even so, this highlights a need for the provision of clear information on housing options available to single parents.

Table 4.63 *Level of awareness of housing options*

Housing Options	*Number*	*Percentage*
▪ Home ownership through a private mortgage	20	41
▪ Home ownership through a local authority loan	14	29
▪ Mortgage Allowance Scheme (from the Council	15	31
▪ Shared Ownership Scheme (from the Council)	31	63
▪ Affordable Housing Scheme (from the Council)	14	29
▪ Renting a home from the Council	46	96
▪ Renting a home from a voluntary organisation	10	20
▪ Improvement works in lieu of Local Authority Housing	3	6
▪ Tenant Purchase Scheme (for Council tenants)	8	16
▪ Local authority Extensions Scheme	4	8
▪ Renting from a private landlord	38	78

4.7 Qualitative Feedback

Respondents were invited to add any comments they felt was relevant to the research at the end of the questionnaire. Those who did so (n. 7) referred to issues such as living in overcrowded conditions, difficulties in accessing the private rented sector, feelings of isolation on living alone as a single parent, a lack of local amenities. and difficulties in accessing the Council Waiting List. This comments are presented in table 3.71.

General Qualitative Comments from Respondents
▪ My name is on the Council list the past three and a half years and I would like my name to go on any other list that can take it, as I feel I'm getting nowhere on the Council, I am privately renting and I'm in a one bedroom apartment and find it very small for myself and son. But I'm happy I have that for my son and I. ▪ I have been told that because my parents home isn't overcrowded that I would find it very hard to get housed. But my mother isn't getting any younger and had high blood pressure so it's a very stressful life she lives with two young wild children living at her home. ▪ Landlords not taking children or EHB. Being made pay the month's deposit yourself where are we meant to get that sort of money from. ▪ When you live on your own its nice to be able to have friends over or if you have a boyfriend for him to come over but some landlords frown on this and tell you that it is unacceptable, but you do get very lonely when you're alone day in day out with no one to talk to especially when all your family and friends live so far away and you're living in an area where you don'' know anyone and the people you do know you'd rather not because they give you a lot of hassle and then you feel trapped and end up getting depressed and down in yourself which can sometimes affect your child which is not healthy. ▪ I don't think that Tallaght area that I live in has anything for young children and young teens. So they go getting into trouble with the Garda and its not fair that young people of Tallaght don't get support so they can get a good start on life. ▪ The waiting list should be improved because young people are waiting on houses for a few years in difficult situation. This should be made top of the list of improvements. ▪ I think it is an awful situation the way the Council will not take your name before 18 to get a house. Then the waiting list takes years. Most people cannot afford private renting.

4.8 Summary of Findings

Key findings from the community survey are outlined below.

Background Data

- Over two fifths (n. 20) of respondents were aged between 21 to 22 years. A further 44 per cent were broken evenly into the age groups of 16-18 years and 19-20 years, and a remaining 13 per cent (n. 6) were in the latter age group of 23-25 years;
- The overwhelmingly prevalent income source was the Lone Parent Family Payment, which was received by 90 per cent (n. 43). 14 percent received rent allowance from the local health board, and eight per cent (n. 4) received maintenance payments from

an (ex) partner. Only one respondent was working full time and a further two worked on a part time basis;

- The majority of respondents (60%) had one child. Among those who have two children, over 73 per cent were aged between 21 and 25 years. All three respondents who had three children were also in this age group.
- No respondents reported ever being married.

Current Housing Situation

- Almost one half, at 46 per cent (n. 22), of respondents are living with their parents. Other common circumstances are renting from the county council, at 29 per cent (n. 14) and renting from a private landlord, at 17 per cent (n. 8). One respondent was homeless.
- Just under 86 per cent (n. 12) of those aged over 21 years were renting housing from the county council, whereas for those living with their parents, 71.5 per cent (n. 15) were aged between 16 and 20 years;
- The majority of respondents with one child are either renting from a private landlord, at 23.3 per cent (n. 7) or living with their parents, at 63.3 per cent (n. 19). Two thirds of those with two children (n. 10) are renting from the County Council, as are two thirds of those with three children (n. 2);
- Over two fifths of respondents (n. 40) lived in a three bedroom house. Six per cent (n. 4) lived in a two bedroom house;
- The two most prevalent areas respondents lived in were Jobstown and Killinarden, with just under 19 per cent (n. 9) of respondents living in each;
- 70 per cent (n. 33) of respondents said that their current housing was not the choice they would prefer, and further 8.5 per cent (n.4) said they did not know, leaving only 21.3 per cent (n. 10) who were satisfied with their current housing situation;
- When asked how likely it was that they would access their preferred housing, one third responded with, 'not likely', and a further 12 per cent (n. 5) said 'never'. Over one quarter (26 per cent, n. 11) said they did not know, leaving only 29 per cent (n.12) who felt this was likely or very likely;

- Those aged between 16 and 20 years felt it less likely that they would access their preferred housing than those aged between 21 and 25 years;
- The most popular option, at 55.3 per cent (n. 21) was renting a home from the county council. 18.4 per cent (n. 7) wanted to buy their own home, and 10.5 per cent (n. 4) stated they wished to buy their own home with the help of the council;
- Just under a half of respondents (n. 24) identified the length of the county council housing waiting lists as a barrier to accessing preferred housing. A quarter of respondents (n. 12) said that their income was too low and 20 per cent (n. 10) said childcare and housing costs contributed to barriers in accessing preferred housing;
- The biggest identified housing issue of respondents was overcrowding, which affected 39 per cent of the sample. Other significant housing issues include repairs and inadequate heating, affording to pay the rent and wanting to move to another area of Tallaght;
- Just over 68 per cent wished to remain living in Tallaght. 8.5 per cent said they did not, yet a further 23.4 per cent said they did not know;
- When asked if they wished to remain living in the same area of Tallaght, over 56 per cent said that they did. A further 14.6 per cent said they did not know;
- The most popular reasons for wanting to remain in the same area were proximity to the respondent's family (66%), feeling that it was their home (47%) and proximity to friends (36%). Physical and structural properties of the area, such as the local school, play areas and general facilities emerged as less significant.

Single Parenthood and Accessing Housing

- 89.4 per cent grew up in Tallaght;
- Just under four fifths had been living at home when they had their first child;
- The biggest problem in accessing housing on becoming a single parent was being admitted to the County Council housing waiting list (45%). Other difficulties experienced by a high proportion of respondents included pressure from their family or parents to leave their home, finding a private landlord who rent to them, accessing a deposit and first month's payment to rent privately and 'getting information on how the Council make their decisions on renting homes';

- In terms of past housing difficulties, respondents noted their experience of a range of related issues, including overcrowding, difficulty in affording their rent or mortgage, needing repairs to their home and inadequate heating, difficulties with neighbours and difficulties in paying bills. Four respondents had experienced an eviction or notice to quit.

Support

- In terms of support options that would have been useful in the past, the most popular was access to housing, 'for a year or two while sorting permanent housing.' Other popular options here were 'someone to explain all the housing options to me,' and 'help applying for a Council home';
- In terms of supports that respondents would find helpful now, over 56 per cent said they would find advice of social welfare and housing benefits useful. Information and advice on housing options also emerged as important. Over two thirds said they would benefit from money advice and help to budget. 25 per cent identified supported housing as a positive support option. 31 per cent said they would find help in finding a new home useful.
- Level of awareness of available housing options varied. While almost all respondents expressed awareness of renting a house from the Council, only 41 per cent were aware of the option of home ownership through a private mortgage. 78 per cent expressed awareness of the option of renting through a private landlord. Awareness of specific Council housing schemes also varied. Knowledge of some schemes was quite low, such as Improvement works in lieu of Local Authority Housing.

Chapter Five *Interviews with Young Lone Parents in Tallaght*

5.1 Introduction

A total of 12 young lone parents were included in this stage of the research. In-depth, qualitative interviews were held with a total of eight young lone parents, aged under 25, who were from Tallaght and were experiencing various levels of housing need. A focus group was held with a further four interviewees. The focal point of these interviews was their actual experiences of housing need, which included living in physically substandard accommodation, living in overcrowded conditions and living in temporary accommodation (i.e. homelessness). Any efforts made by interviewees to access alternative accommodation were also explored, through the private rented sector and local authority housing. All interviewees accessed for this stage of the research were female, which reflects the overwhelmingly high proportion of single parents who are single.

Interviewees also shared their views on how important it was for them to live in Tallaght and their perception of factors of their local community they considered crucial, such as familiarity and proximity of friends and family. Finally, we also discussed the effect their housing need had on other aspects of their life, such as forming career and study plans for the future, their perception of self identity and independence and, importantly, their relationship with their children and perceptions of their children's sense of security.

The table below presents a summary of the housing experiences and needs of interviewees. The analysis of these data is qualitative, and this table is presented here simply to provide an overview of these issues.

Int.	Current Housing Situation	Felt Housing Need
1	NABCO Local Authority Accommodation	Improving local facilities/local physical environment
2	Local Authority housing (in need of repair)	Transfer
3	Local Authority Accommodation	Improving local facilities/local physical environment

4	Local authority housing (in need of repair) outside Tallaght	Transfer to Tallaght
5	Local authority housing (overcrowded)	Repair of house
6	Living with family, overcrowding	Independent accommodation in Tallaght
7	Living with grandmother, overcrowding	Independent accommodation in Tallaght
8	Homeless (in B&B)	Independent accommodation in Tallaght

5.2 Current Housing Circumstances

The predominant housing circumstance for interviewees was living in local authority accommodation. Other housing situations included living with their parents or relatives in overcrowded conditions, living in what the interviewee perceived to be physically substandard accommodation, living in local authority accommodation outside of Tallaght and living in homeless accommodation.

5.21 Overcrowding

Interviewees who were living with their family described many negative consequences of this arrangement. Often they felt that it led to cramped living conditions for everyone concerned, and worried about sharing a room with their child as s/he grew older:

> Even the baby, I mean at the moment its fine but when she gets a bit older she needs to know that this is her grandparent's (home) and this is her house. I think it happens too much where kids are raised by their grandparents.

One interviewee described how she felt this affected the lifestyle of other family members and expressed a sense of discomfort over this:

> I don't mean arguments, but there is a lot of strain, you know that kind of way? When she's (baby) in bed, she goes to bed at 8 or half 8, so I mean everyone has to be really quiet and tippy-toe around, its not really fair, like my mum and dad have reared their kids, its not really fair that they have to change their, not change their lifestyle, but if they want the radio on they can't, my sisters have to tippy toe around and not have their friends over do you know what I mean? Its too much

> strain. I don't mean – they never said anything to me, they never probably would ever, but I don't think on them its that fair.

Another noted how such circumstances led to tension and sometimes arguments in the household:

> Its cramped enough as it is. We have arguments over stupid things … we get in each other's way. Because I'm getting to a stage now where I want to keep things a certain way, but we both want different things. So it does cause arguments. I just think having my child in the house, it does get on people's wits.

5.23 Allocated Local Authority Accommodation in Another Community

An interviewee who had been allocated local authority housing outside of Tallaght expressed dissatisfaction with their circumstances. The experience of moving to a new community in a community outside Tallaght was found difficult:

> I think it's very unfair. … I had no choice but to take X. I didn't know any of the ones around me, they are a different breed of people up here as well. That's the problem, everyone knows everyone's business.

Interviewees described difficulties in integrating into a new community, for both themselves and their children. One interviewee described how her children in particular found it hard to move away from friendships they had established in their previous community:

> They don't go out. They spend a lot of their free time inside and I bring them up to the disco up there (in previous community) because all their friends out of school are there. The mothers that are over there, the children that they are friends with are great, they bring them over for the day. They really give me a lot of support. A lot of support for the kids. The kids don't feel like they are locked up in a house. It's more of a community over there for me compared to what it is over here. I'm not from here, I'm from over there and everyone knows me, who I am.

Overall, it emerged that close community bonds had been established for interviewees within the community into which they have been born and raised. It was felt that having to move to a new and unknown area outside of Tallaght as a lone parent caused many problems for the family involved, both in terms of leaving old ties and support structures and in trying to establish new ones. As one interviewee noted, 'my head is over there but I live over here'.

5.24 Physically Substandard Accommodation

Two interviewees described the physical state of their current local authority accommodation as being substandard. Comments included:

> The heating was cut off before we moved in, I can't get the heating in and I'm 5 years in it… the last person cut it out. … The whole ceiling in the kitchen fell through. … They seem to laugh at young people.

> There are cracks on the doorframes, the draft that comes in the rooms, its absolutely freezing. I took the lagging jacket of the boiler and opened the hot press door and there is some heat then.

The main housing need of one of these interviewees however, was a transfer to the local community in Tallaght where she grew up.

5.25 Homelessness

One interviewee was living in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, which she shared with 5 other lone parents and one single woman. While the physical condition of the accommodation was described as adequate, though in want of some minor repair, there were other aspects of this living arrangement which she found undesirable, frustrating and very difficult. These were the fact that the accommodation was shared with people she previously did not know, with communal living areas, that their was no level of security in this arrangement, such as a tenancy contract, and that she felt it had a negative effect on her parenting skills as well as on her child's general wellbeing. While the

importance of independent living space as a general theme of these interviews is further explored below, some issues raised here related specifically to the experience of being homeless.

In terms of sharing accommodation, she described how the general stresses of being homeless are exacerbated by sharing living space with people she did not know:

> I find the place now, its alright, compared to some B&Bs, its handy, it's a nice place. But …we're all sharing the kitchen, we're all stressed out because we're all homeless, we've all got different personalities and we all do everything differently, you know the way they clash and that. And then with the kids as well. Well my daughter is the youngest, and there's a 5 year gap… so there are problems there as well.

The interviewee describes how the other tenants in her accommodation also found the situation difficult:

> We all complain about the same thing in the house, that we can't live together ! That's the main thing. If we're not complaining about each other we're complaining about each other's kids.

The welfare of her child while living in temporary shared accommodation emerged as a serious concern for her. She describes her apprehension about her daughter playing with children older than her, and a perception that she was being bullied by the older children:

> The kids that are all in it are older than my daughter. She is two and a half and the youngest is seven and she would be actually eight next month. There it's an eight year old and a nine year old. They would always be teasing her and picking on her and that. I don't really like it that much.

Sharing accommodation also put a strain on her relationship with her daughter:

> I don't hate the actual B&B itself, but I hate the people that I'm living with. (Child) can't be herself, I have to constantly be telling her to be quiet.

An outcome of this was that the interviewee endeavoured to spend as little time in the house as possible, although, unlike some other B&B homeless accommodation, they were allowed to stay there during the day. An attendee to the An Cosan training course, she described how she would prepare in advance for any holidays by organising a friend or relative's house to stay in for each day. She describes how on a day to day level, she and her daughter spend as little time as possible in the accommodation:

> You can stay there all day if you want, you don't have to leave, but because of the situation in the house, I just get up every morning and go. Maybe once out of the week I'll stay there for the whole day, doing my washing and that. That would be it. Apart from that I'm gone for the rest of the time. …I just don't be there most of the time. I leave early in the morning Monday to Friday and I do my course and I'm doing voluntary work and things like that, just to get me out of the house and the baby goes to the crèche then, Monday to Friday.
>
> Me and the baby either stay in the room or I do be out up here in An Cosan or at my mothers. Basically I am hardly ever there.

In terms of a lack of security in her accommodation, in that it was emergency accommodation, with no agreed tenancy contract or any form of control for the tenant over how long s/he may live there, the interviewee described the sense of uncertainty she felt in terms of planning her future, such as career or study options. Until she was secure in accommodation, she felt powerless to improve her current situation, though she was anxious to attend third level education:

> When you're homeless, it speaks for yourself, you've no home that's your own. And like that, I could go home today and there could be a letter saying, well you have to move. And I've no say in the matter. I can't say, 'well I'm staying here.'... And I can't bring anybody to court or fight to stay here. They could say to me, well you've to move out somewhere in Finglas. I've no choice. I'd have to get up and go, or on the streets. Its like, you're an adult but you've someone telling you what you can and can't do. So its like, when do you ever get your independence?

Overall, sharing accommodation with people she did not know and a lack of tenancy security contributed negatively to the already difficult circumstance of being homeless, creating a traumatic and very difficult living circumstance for this lone parent.

5.3 Felt and Expressed Housing Need

Interviewee's expressed their housing need through the local authority's housing waiting list. Their felt housing need relates to 'the expectations or aspirations of the people concerned,' (Scottish Executive, see literature review for further detail) which is explored in these qualitative interviews. Interviewees discussed barriers in accessing all housing options, including the private rented sector, owner occupation and local authority housing.

5.31 Trying to Access Alternative Housing: Buying a House

While buying a house privately was considered by interviewees as an ultimate aspiration in accessing housing, due to the costs involved, and even with assistance from the shared housing scheme, it was considered unachievable in their foreseeable future:

> I have no way of getting a job at the moment, because I have no childcare or I haven't gone to college. I've done my Leaving, but I'm not qualified to do anything, the only thing I can do is shop work or something like that. I wouldn't earn enough money to pay a childminder, let alone get a mortgage and the mortgages now, even up here! … There is no way. Unless when the kids get bigger and I go to school, but that wouldn't be for years and years. Just financially.

5.32 Trying to Access Alternative Housing: the Private Rented Sector

Any efforts to access the private rented sector in Tallaght were quickly met with the impossible reality of cost. Interviewees described a market of primarily three bedroom houses, impractical deposit demands and very high rent rates that significantly exceed rent allowances:

> In Tallaght … it's very hard to get a house within the price range that you're allowed. Most house are like €1,200. You would be lucky if you got one for a €1,000 or even €800, but then it could be really small and horrible. I kind of took a miss on that.
>
> I didn't have the deposit. It's very hard to save for a deposit. Even for a lone parent. A month's rent in advance. The Welfare will pay the deposit but they wouldn't give the months rent in advance or they pay the months rent in advance but they won't give you the deposit.
> I looked into it … but the price was like 1400 euros, you know what I mean, and the rent, I wasn't allowed, I wouldn't be entitled to any rent allowance or anything like that you know. So I wouldn't be able to afford it.
>
> Well, most of the houses now are about 1200. now we're only entitled to 953 euros. And the way I see it, if I'm going to be giving out money each month. Like I'd have to share with another lone parent or somebody, so if I – I'm sharing already with 4 other lone parents at the moment and I don't have to pay anything and I'm getting headaches, so there's no point in me paying out money to get another headache. And you're waiting longer (on local authority waiting list) in rented accommodation.

One interviewee who unsuccessfully attempted to access private rented accommodation outside of Tallaght described high rent levels and difficulties in moving outside of Tallaght, where she attended a training course and where her child's crèche was:

> I ended up getting private accommodation in town, in (Dublin city centre location), a one bedroom apartment, they were looking for a €1,000 a month. When I went to look at it, it was nice, but it wasn't worth the money and financially I would have had to make up the difference. I may as well forget about it and having to travel all the way to Tallaght every day, that would have been a bit of a headache as well.

One interviewee described a ‘catch 22’ situation that can develop from accessing private rented sector accommodation through the rent allowance scheme:

> Once you get into private renting, you can never get out. Say if you’ve (are on) rent allowance, you can’t work. Because if you get rent allowance they take it away. which means you get nowhere. You’re trapped. You can’t get a job, you can’t improve your circumstances, ‘cause you can’t get money to do it. If that could change, if they could change that.

The private rented sector in Tallaght emerged as an unrealistic housing option to interviewees, due to high rent demands that exceeded rent allowance payments.

5.33 Trying to Access Alternative Housing: Local Authority Housing

All interviewees were either currently on the housing waiting list, or had experience of it. Local authority accommodation was perceived as the most realistic housing option available.

- *Being on the List*

Some interviewees expressed frustration over their perception of the operation of the housing waiting list and the lack of clear information about this.

> They should definitely explain to you how the housing list works, how someone like that, what happened in that case

Confusion over the operation of the list emerged from conflicting anecdotes interviewees recounted relating to housing allocations of people they knew. Moreover, a sense of pessimism prevailed in terms of waiting times, drawn from experiences of acquaintances in local authority housing:

> I know someone who was waiting 10 years to move. And one of my mam’s friends, her daughter was on the list 10 years, she got a house three doors down from her mother. So she waited long enough. And they were all living in the one

> house with only 2 bedrooms. Like 7 of them in the house. And she had to wait ten years. So.

- *Homeless Status*

One interviewee, who was living in bed and breakfast accommodation, had homeless priority status, meaning that they would be given priority when appropriate housing arises, over those on the general waiting list, who are prioritised by a points system:

> Because I'm homeless we don't really have a number…The last time I spoke to them I was told I would have between a 12 to 18 month waiting list. That's the way it is now because its doing an investigation to prove that I had nowhere else to go. I really genuinely am homeless. Tomorrow when I go I will ask her how long is the wait.

Again, this interviewee expressed some ambiguity over her knowledge of the operation of the housing list:

> Well, they said to me, the way it works is if you're homeless, they won't look at your file until you're 12-15 months. And then they'll look at your file and allocate your file. But you have to be there a year. Then that's when they'll start looking at your file. Then you could be anywhere after that from, you could get a house straight away and then again you could be waiting longer because there are people in there that are waiting 2 years for that.

As a homeless person, this interviewee noted how she was obliged to make regular contact with the county council, so as to ensure her name remained on the list. She related here her opinion on the importance of self presentation in relation to accessing housing as soon as possible. She also expressed a sense of being judged in this process:

> From the (point of view of a) homeless person or a person that is waiting for a house as well, it depends on how they construct themselves when they are talking to these people too, if they start shouting at them, they shout back! I have seen it from my own eyes. I believe in being nice, but they have an attitude often because they have a

house or because their life is just great and they are looking down on me or whoever they are seeing. They are looking down on them, which I don't think is right at all. Because we're all human at the end of the day, we all have our problems. Some worse than others.

- *Allocations*

All interviewees on the housing waiting list expressed a desire to be housed in Tallaght. While they have an opportunity to express their first housing area preference to the county council, interviewees were aware that this did not guarantee them housing in this area:

> Well I asked them could I go on the Tallaght list, but they said that when you're homeless you find that you don't really have a choice, where you go, they give you that first house that is available. But hopefully they will give me a house in Tallaght.

Reasons for wanting to be allocated housing in Tallaght included being closer to freinds and family:

> She (mother) is the only family I have really. …It's only me and my sister and my brother. … I would like to be around the family. I would like to be in Jobstown or near Jobstown that is where I would like to be based. Well if I don't get a house in Jobstown I'll just have to try and see if I can get a transfer. Keep working on a transfer, that will be my next aim for me, if I don't get one in Tallaght, but I will take a house basically anywhere they offer me at this stage, because anything is better than living in that B & B.
>
> All my friends are over there. I did have friends in the area, but they went …… My friends that I grew up with and that I have known all my life. …I feel a raw deal.

> It's very hard to come to terms with it. … I couldn't see the problem at all. That's what annoyed me. Its like they do it on purpose, like they are teaching you a lesson.

> My life would have been an awful lot better off … if I hadn't got a house in X (an area in Tallaght), an awful lot better off, because I would be out working. I would have been able to go out and do a course.

5. 4 Having Your Own Space

Interviewees living in shared accommodation all expressed the wish for their own, independent accommodation. The most extreme example of this was an interviewee who was living in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation, yet it was strongly espoused by other interviewees. Comments included:

> (I would like) my own space. I wouldn't like to live with people I didn't know.

> I want John (baby) to learn that – its great having this, Nan in the house, but it would be nice to be able to get out on my own. I want him to have his own space as well. At the moment he doesn't have his own bedroom. He's in the room with me. So, just a place we can call our own.

> … Its what everyone wants really, you just don't always get it. I just, I've wanted to get out on my own for a long time. I think it will get to the point where if the Council house doesn't come up, I'll just go. I don't know where, but I'll find something.

5.5 Living in Tallaght

All interviewees wanted to access housing in Tallaght. Reasons provided here included proximity to family and friends, familiarity, and current commitments to training courses or work in Tallaght:

> Well I was brought up in Tallaght, my family lives in Tallaght, I'm doing a course in Tallaght, there's a crèche in Tallaght and I hope to put her in school in Tallaght (laughs). And everything, my friends and all are Tallaght orientated.
>
> I have a child, my job is in Tallaght and my childminder is in Tallaght as well. I wouldn't trust somebody else, it'd be hard to find somebody else that I could trust. I wouldn't trust somebody else.
>
> Well I wouldn't want to move out of Tallaght because me family are living in Tallaght. … I'd want to be close to me family and me mam.

Some interviewees expressed concern over their personal safety about the possibility of their moving to another, unknown area in Dublin, if local authority accommodation should be provided to them outside of Tallaght:

> I wouldn't like to move somewhere else where I wouldn't know anyone, I wouldn't feel very safe, you know?

While some interviewees provided positive feedback about local amenities, conversely, others living in areas such as Fettercairn and Jobstown described their local area as deprived, with few, poor quality community facilities:

> There is a park over in Jobstown, to be honest you wouldn't go there, the kids go to the toilet, you have to be careful, there is a gap there, you wouldn't know if there are going to be junkies going in and out of the playground. Your kind of looking around before you set the kids loose in it.
>
> I don't think there is a lot around here for children.
>
> Nothing has flowers or anything. They don't look after it all. My road isn't so bad, because it's a cul-de-sac. All it would take would be 2 or 3 minutes. Some of the houses are just filthy.

5.6 Economic Realities of Being a Young Lone Parent

Interviewees described the economic constraints placed on them as lone parents, and barriers to accessing the labour market or furthering their education. While these barriers in part relate to their responsibilities as a parent, they also spoke of external constraints, such as lack of affordable and secure housing and childcare:

> It is hard, because I get €135 that's the supplementary welfare allowance and yet I get €30 out of here (local voluntary service) but you might as well say that go towards, €30 I get out of here that would be my bus fare and when Jane is not in, if I have her here when I'm leaving I'll get her lunch, sometimes she doesn't get to get her dinner here she only gets her breakfast. So that €30 you might as well say, its gone. So the 135 that I get that goes on my food, we have a fridge and live by day. I can't go out and do a week's shopping because the freezer is tiny and you can't freeze anything in it. There is no room. The fridge is small as well.
>
> My mother has been on the lone parent book since I was four, my whole life has been in poverty, well until I left home. But like that my whole life has been poverty and I don't want that for my own daughter. I want to go out and get a job, I hate having my book, I would love to say here is your book back and be out working 42 hours a week getting a proper paid wage.
>
> I would like to go to College. I would like to be a psychologist. You have to get a house first, go to College, then when I go to College I can start going about getting a career. I'm not afraid to work either, when I come home, I didn't get the labour, I worked up until I had the baby. When I had the baby, she was between 6 and 8 weeks old I went back to work but I was only working part time and I applied for my book and I got my book but I left work because I had no babysitter. I didn't go back to work, I done my training course then to February 2001 and she was in a nursery, then I realised that wasn't what I wanted to do, so I left that. The childcare is very hard. … I had her in a nursery down in Tallaght

> village and I was getting my book and a £100 on the old course that I doing and my childcare for the week for £65 a week so I was only earning £35 for myself.

Some interviewees described difficulties in saving and budgeting their income:

> I just say I'm saving, to be honest. But the weeks go by and the money I'm supposed to be saving I'm spending, because there's nobody pushing you. …I haven't really got any idea how to, because I never have to do it. I'm always, 'mam will you lend us this, mam will you lend us £20', you know what I mean. … I don't know how I'm going to manage, because I have all these plans.

5.7 Parenting

Some parents spoke of the difficulties they initially experience on being a young lone parent, such as adapting to and responding to new responsibilities, while still young themselves:

> It's not about me anymore. Anything that I do, whatever the outcome its going to effect my daughter, so I have to watch what I'm doing and who I'm around, am I doing things for her sake. I don't want her to be affected by anything. Don't get me wrong, for the first year, part of me thought I was 16 and I could go out to parties and all. I had a lot of arguments with my mother over it, she was trying to tell me you're a mother, to be responsible. It took a year for me to cop on, but there are parents out there that still haven't really coped on to that. You have to grow up quickly.

One interviewee described how she sometimes experienced a sense of confusion and uncertainty relating to some aspects of childrearing, due to conflicting advice she received from different people:

> You're always going on someone else's advice, on what they're telling you. Whereas, if somebody outside (told you), because if I don't do what my Mam says, I feel like I'm not listening to her. She thinks I don't appreciate her.

The potential benefits of attending a parenting course were raised by some interviewees, in terms of providing clear information and advice on child rearing. One interviewee expressed interest in issues such as their relationship with their child and how this affects the child's behaviour:

> She's a very good child, but its like, if I'm under stress or frustrated, anything she does I snap at her. Where, I think if they do a parenting course, they shouldn't just do it on the child's behaviour but on your feelings as well. And how your mood can affect the child. Because I've noticed with myself, my daughter could do something, and I could be happy, and I'd react to it like in a happy way. But if I'm upset or freaked, she could do the exact same thing and I'd snap at her.

A related issue is the perception young lone parents have of society's view of them. Some recounted experiences in which they identified a stigma attached to being a lone parent, as well as confusion and anger over how to respond to this:

> You do get generalised an awful lot I think. And you feel a bit, … you just feel really, not intimidated, intimidated isn't really the right word. You're half angry and you're half 'oh god, should I?' (feel bad), but then half like saying, 'well what the fuck has it got to do with you'.

> People give out about young mothers being on welfare … I mean I'd love to not be on social welfare, its not exactly the greatest thing in the world, and anyone who's on it, I don't think anyone's very proud to be on it. You have to have money to survive…

5.8 Special Support Needs

Interviewees spoke in detail of the additional stresses and strains they experienced due to simply being a young lone parent, as well as the constant insecurity they felt from their current housing need. The interviewee who was homeless felt under particular strain, which was caused primarily by her insecure tenure and living in shared temporary accommodation:

> A lot of people that are homeless or looking for accommodation and they are not living in their own home, there is a lot of shame involved and guilt I suppose. Even with me I find it hard.

She went on to describe how being homeless can lead to low self esteem, and can damage the relationship of a single mother with her child:

> Even for myself, I would class myself, I wouldn't look at myself as having low self-esteem yet I would come across to a lot of people who have got low self-esteem that are homeless and that have been homeless or who have left home at a young age and never had a house. There is no support there for them. To me they are walking around in a world of their own, they don't know where to start and where to begin and anywhere they go they seem to be pushed away.
>
> I've noticed like since I've become homeless, I've become extra stressed out. And like, that mixing with people that are different than me and have different views. That can only get on top of you and make you angry and stressful. If you've no one there to talk to about it and release some of it to, you end up taking it out on your children. And its not just me, I've seen people in the house, when they freak taking it out on their kids as well. And I don't even think they realise what they're doing.
>
> As soon as you become homeless, you're stressed out automatically, that's added stress put on your head. As soon as you're in a situation like that. So before you even meet who you have to live with, you're stressed out

Another interviewee, who was not homeless, but had been allocated local authority accommodation outside of Tallaght, was suffering from depression, and described feelings of isolation, and a lack of support:

> I was suffering from depression when I was in the flat and I overdosed so I moved back to my Ma and then when I was in (flat complex in Dublin city area) I was getting that depression again and I moved back to my Ma before I would have done anything stupid. Getting it in that house as well, it's killing me.

5.9 Summary and Conclusion

- Young lone parents in housing need face constant constraints and difficulties in their lives, in terms of economic security, accessing the labour market or further education and in their role as parent;
- The predominant housing circumstance for interviewees was living with their parents or relatives in overcrowded conditions. Other housing situations included living in physically substandard local authority accommodation, living in local authority accommodation outside of Tallaght and living in homeless accommodation;
- The private rented sector in Tallaght emerged as an unrealistic housing option to interviewees, due to high rent demands that exceeded rent allowance payments. All interviewees were either currently on the housing waiting list, or had experience of it. Local authority accommodation was perceived as the most realistic housing option available;
- Interviewees living in shared accommodation all expressed the wish for their own, independent accommodation;
- All interviewees wanted to access housing in Tallaght. Reasons provided here included proximity to family and friends, familiarity, and current commitments to training courses or work in Tallaght;
- Interviewees described the economic constraints placed on them as lone parents, and barriers to accessing the labour market or furthering their education. While these barriers in part relate to their responsibilities as a parent, they also spoke of external constraints, such as lack of affordable and secure housing and childcare;
- Some parents spoke of the difficulties they initially experienced on being a young lone parent, such as adapting to and responding to new responsibilities. Interviewees also spoke in detail of the additional stresses and strains they experienced due to

simply being a young lone parent, as well as the constant insecurity they felt from their current housing need.

These data clearly show that the principal issue for young lone parents is accessing independent and secure accommodation. The importance of access to clear information on the operation of the SDCC housing waiting list was also raised. In the allocation of local authority housing, the importance of providing accommodation in the individual's location of choice, insofar as is possible emerged as a strong finding. These data also highlight significant barriers faced by young lone parents in accessing independent and secure housing in the private rented sector, and home ownership was clearly recognised as not being an option at all for this group.

In light of these multiple difficulties experienced by young lone parents in accessing their preferred accommodation choice, it emerged that a transitional housing project would play an important role in helping young lone parents to overcome barriers to accessing their own independent accommodation. Important features of such a model would include the provision of fully independent and self contained accommodation for each family unit and the development of tenancy agreements in order to ensure a sense of security of families involved. Such a service could play an important role in

A need also emerged for additional support, such as parenting courses, budgeting advice and an emotional support, such as a counselling service. Important features of such support would include flexibility and services being optional.

Chapter Six *A Model of Best Practice*

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of a model of best practice for the provision of supported housing to young families in the UK, followed by a brief outline of a similar supported housing scheme in Dublin. The development of a supported housing model in Tallaght is then contextualised through feedback from local service providers from both the voluntary and public sector.

Research leading to the identification of an appropriate supported housing model involved a review of research on supported housing in the UK, an assessment of information on supported housing project on the internet, and consultation with service providers and housing research experts in the UK. The model identified has recently been chosen by the Ministerial Task Force for the Teenage Pregnancy Unit as a pilot for the teenage pregnancy housing initiative.

A study visit was conducted of this model of best practice by the following members of the research advisory group:

- Liza Costello, Centre for Social and Educational Research,
- Francis Chance, Barnardos,
- Anne Prendiville, Tallaght Partnership,
- Julie Cruickshank, South Western Area Health Board,
- Mick Fagan, South Dublin County Council,
- Paddy de Roe, South Dublin County Council.

6.2 Background to development of project

6.21 The Bromford Housing Group and the Supported Housing Project

The Bromford Housing Group is a housing association, responsible for various supported housing schemes, affordable housing and support services in the midlands of England. It represents a group of housing organisations which own, manage and develop rented,

shared ownership. The objective of the Bromford Housing Group is, 'creating communities where people want to stay.'

It currently manages a total of six projects for young parents. The social policy context for many of these projects is located in the 1999 Action Plan to Reduce Teenage Parenthood, produced by the UK Social Exclusion Unit, which highlighted the key role played by supported housing in this new strategy. Bromford's supported housing project for young parents in Tipton, Wolverhampton, was launched (among five others) as a model of good practice by the Social Exclusion Unit.

6.22 Background to Development of the Tipton Housing Project

Two correlated issues led the development of the Tipton Supported Housing Project, which opened in December 2002: a high pregnancy rate among young women in the Tipton area and recognition of it being the most deprived area within the Sandwell county. Research conducted by the current service manager into housing needs of young vulnerable families in the area played a key role, making specific recommendations for the development of such a project in the area (Dutton, 2001).

6.23 Difficulties Encountered in Development Stage: The Local Community

The housing project is located in Tipton, a district of Sandwell located in the jurisdiction of Dudley, outside Wolverhampton. Its specific location is in a semi residential area, with a high level of industrial buildings, such as factories. Despite this, the project encountered strong opposition from the local community during the initial stage.

Countering this negative local reaction was approached via two means. Firstly, while the project was being built, petty vandal acts to the property (such as stealing bricks), were responded to by providing 24 hour security supervision of the premises, facilitated by the development of positive relations with a local councillor in the development of the project. Secondly, efforts were made to appease local community concerns through the provision of clear information on the nature of support provided and the profile of clients, via newsletters and attendance to local resident meetings. Again the positive

involvement of the local councillor in the project played a significant role here. Since the project has opened, there have been no complaints made by the local community about the project.

6.3 Support

A low to medium level of support is provided to clients in the Tipton project[14]. The only obligatory support that tenants must agree to is the weekly session with the full time support worker. During this meeting, an action plan of tenant's goals is developed. During the first keyworking session, which takes place approximately a week after the client has moved in, the support worker works with the client to identify the level of support they need. This is done through use of the Bromford outcome-monitoring model which was developed in order to, 'monitor the progress of tenants/residents receiving support and to evaluate the success of the support provided in helping people develop their ability to live independently … (as well as) to be used jointly with the purchaser of the service to agree how many hours of support are needed for each individual' (Bromford booklet on outcome monitoring model).

The importance of allowing clients a one week period after they've moved in before this process is stressed both in the above leaflet, as well as by the current support worker for the Tipton project. The pamphlet states in relation to this,

> 'although we initially aimed to do this when signing up new tenants for their tenancies, workers found that tenants felt overloaded with new information and issues at this stage and could not cope with going through the model then. It seems to work best when carried out at the tenant's first keyworking session when it can be used to agree the support plan and prioritise areas to focus on.'

Issues included in this model are:

- Education and training;
- Independent living skills;
- Social networks;

- Work;
- Community networks;
- Health;
- Money;
- Parenting skills;
- Risk.

All of these issues form the focus of key working sessions. Within each of these, tenants are invited to chose from a list of ten options, the level at which both they and the support worker feel them to be, the first option being considered the lowest and the tenth option representing the optimum level. For example, within *education and training,* option one is, 'no reading and/or writing skills. No formal qualifications. Refuses support in these areas,' while option ten reads, 'No support needs in relation to reading and writing. Currently accessing education and/or training on a regular basis.' This process aids in the identification of the focus of key working support during the tenant's stay in the project. Other issues focused on in key working sessions include self esteem and confidence of the tenant.

Following this, tenants identify their key goals, which may vary from accessing a local training course to maintaining their flat and the actions they must carry out in order to fulfil them. Any actions taken over the previous week are noted. On average, meetings last one hour. However, the level of key work support provided for each tenant varies on the perceived need of the tenant and support worker.

Staff are available on the project on a Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 basis. The office provides a drop in base for clients, where they can make general queries and access information relating to local training and education courses. Talks by local service providers are organised regularly for tenants here, on issues ranging from independent

[14] The project we visited in Tipton, provided a low-medium level of support. However, this is set within the context of a continuum of support, from high to low, provided within a range of Bromford accommodation services.

living skills to parenting. Consultation with tenants on what they would find useful plays an important role in the subject matter of these information sessions.

Regular supports include:

- Surestart:
  - weekly play sessions for parents and children;
  - Provision of play equipment;
  - Monthly visits by health professionals.
- CAB workers: provide weekly advice to tenants on an individual basis
- Regular attendance of nurse to provide sexual health advice
- Baby First Aid class
- Health and Safety Sessions.

6.4 Client Profile and Admittance Policy

There is provision for a total of nine young parent families in the project. All of these are single parent families, although two parent families are also allowed. The project caters for young parents aged between 16 and 29 years. However, the majority of clients are aged under 24 years. The rationale for including those aged over 25 years is to include those who may have learning disabilities, and also to prevent some parents coming from a disadvantaged background from being excluded from housing support services. Mothers must be at least six months pregnant on admittance. The project does not operate a waiting list, as it was felt that this may raise expectations of prospective tenants, who then may not access accommodation there, or may be obliged to wait for a long period of time.

The basic criteria for clients is that they are vulnerable single people or couples aged 16-29 years, who are either six months pregnant or have up to two children, under the age of five years. The term 'vulnerable' is taken to mean people who have particular difficulty in living independently without support, because of social circumstances, external pressures, or personal factors that limit their ability to cope. This includes, for the purposes of the scheme, all people leaving care. Parents must also be homeless prior to

admittance. However, it is noteworthy that the definition of homelessness for young parents in the UK includes those living in overcrowded accommodation, unlike Irish policy, which states that a person must be living in temporary accommodation, sleeping rough or living temporarily in a friend's home before they are deemed homeless.

If clients have a history of drug use, they must be on a methadone maintenance programme in order to be admittance. A specific drugs policy has not as yet been developed.

The minimum length of stay is six months. However, if a tenant strongly wishes to leave prior to this, they are allowed do so. While the maximum length of stay is two years and the project is relatively new, the service manager noted that experience from other Bromford housing projects suggests that average length of stay will be nine months.

Current tenants had previously either been living in overcrowded circumstances in their family home or had come from a high support housing unit.

6.5 Referral and Application Process

Tenants are referred from the local authority, based on age and homeless status. At this stage, a referral form (see Appendix B) is filled out by the potential tenant and referral agency, in which the support needs of the individual are stated. The service manager can meet those referred in their own home to describe the project and the level of support it offers, and allow them to ask any questions or discuss any concerns they may have.

Following this stage, tenants are invited to view the project itself, and an informal interview is conducted between them and the service manager. Although not yet in operation, it is planned that a peer support element will be incorporated into the application process, whereby a tenant would meet with the prospective tenant to discuss the project and to share their experiences of living there. The aim of this is to provide a less formal environment for a potentially daunting interview and to allay any fears or

concerns they may have. A more detailed application form is also filled out at this point (see Appendix B).

Finally, if it is agreed by both the potential tenant and the service manager that the project and level of support offered is suitable to the tenant's needs, a tenancy agreement is signed, which outlines rights and responsibilities of the tenant (see Appendix B).

6.6 Physical Layout

The project offers high quality, purpose built self contained apartments to a total of nine families, as well as one community resource flat. Each standard apartment has one double and one single bedroom, a spacious living room and bathroom, a kitchenette and a storing area which can facilitate storage of a pram or buggy. Each apartment is fully furnished. They are duplex apartments (i.e. there are two apartments within each housing unit). Apartments face into a shared courtyard and garden area.

Communal shared areas include an indoor and outdoor play centre with play items provided and a communal garden area, which is surrounded by a secure boundary to ensure children can play safely and incorporates a safe rubberised surface for children to play on. The play area is available from nine to five, Monday to Friday. Residents were previously consulted about having it open outside of these hours, unsupervised but expressed a preference for this current arrangement. The resource flat on site is used both as a base for staff and a drop in facility for residents.

6.7 Tenancy Agreements

Young families are given Assured Short-hold Tenancies. The expected length of stay is six to nine months. The maximum length of stay is two years. Length of stay depends on the families' need and their level of development.

6.8 Staff Structure and Roles

Staff include one service manager, two floating support workers and one support worker. Full job descriptions are provided in Appendix B.

6.61 Service Manager

The role of the service manager is to manage a total of 65 Bromford housing units. She is based within the community resource flat in the Tipton project.

6.62 Support Worker

The main role of the support worker is to, 'provide support services for tenants of Bromford properties and others, to identify and deliver a package of support to meet the needs of each individual. Key duties and responsibilities include the selection and allocation of all referrals to each scheme, the provision of key-work support, scheme management, rent collection and arrears control as well as other general issues. In terms of key work support, support worker's weekly individual meetings with tenants involve setting goals and action plans, often relating to tenant's life skills, including:

- how to use and maintain personal equipment and appliances carefully;
- how to budget;
- resettlement and move on advice;
- managing personal safety an security;
- reminding and prompting on compliance with medication (where relevant);
- encouraging personal hygiene and maintaining condition of their property;
- liasing with Medical, Social Work and other relevant support agencies;
- promoting tenant involvement in social activities and in evaluating the support service;
- investigating and dealing with tenant's complaints;
- intervening and assisting with tenant's disputes with neighbours if necessary.

For a total of nine families, there is one support worker.

6.63 Floating Support Workers

Floating support workers have the responsibility of providing support to previous Bromford tenants who are now living independently. Due to the fact that the Tipton project has recently opened, none of the floating support's current clients are from this

project. However, when current residents have left the housing project, those who wish to will also avail of housing support. The extent and nature of floating support depends on the needs of the individual client, which are identified through the development of an action plan, similar to that used by the support worker. Needs vary from help accessing housing and other benefits such as completing relevant forms, to linking in with local training courses, to issues around self esteem. Each floating support worker works with a total of 12 families at any one time.

6.7 Resident's Feedback

As part of the study visit, a focus group was held with five tenants of the housing project, to hear their own experiences of it. Feedback was extremely positive on all discussed aspects of the project.

Interviewees discussed how initial negative perceptions of housing support projects, often originating in previous negative experiences were appeased by an introductory process in which the service manager visited them in their own homes, described clearly what the project provided and responded to any concerns they had. They also described how initial negative reactions to the project related to its physical location, which was outside their own local communities. However, such negative reactions were assuaged on moving to the project. The following issues were identified as crucial positive factors of the Tipton supported housing project:

- *Privacy of clients:* In terms of the physical layout of the building, the positive balance between shared communal facilities with other tenants with the privacy of having their own apartment.

  'The apartments are really nice … I couldn't ask for more.'
- *Support relating to needs of client:* Interviewees felt that a key positive feature was the fact that attendance to many support features was voluntary. While support features were there, they did not feel obliged to attend them (with the exception of the key working sessions, which are obligatory). This was related to their sense of independence and also self confidence, in being given responsibility for themselves.

Those who had previous experiences of living in high support accommodation expressed that they were happier receiving the current level of support.

'The support is there if you need it, but its not in your face'

- *Peer support:* Peer support from other tenants emerged as highly significant to the success of the project. There was a strong community spirit in the housing project among tenants and also staff, facilitated by shared communal facilities and led to the development of friendships among tenants. Some spoke of an increasing sense of isolation from old friends, whom they felt could not fully appreciate the demands their status as parents made on their social life.

  'If you panicked about something with the baby in the middle of the night or something, you know you could just run next door …'

- Interviewees also discussed how they had a role in identifying what additional supports they would find useful, such as visiting professionals.

Interviewees related an experience of being negatively labelled by society because of their status as young lone parents, and they felt that this was reflected in the typical standard of services provided to them, or housing allocated to them. They expressed that this housing project contradicted this usual experience, by being of a high physical standard and providing high quality though non-imposing support as they needed it, in a friendly environment. All of this led to increased self confidence and a very positive overall experience of living there:

'I love it here. I wouldn't change anything about it.'

6.8 Conclusion

A factor contributing to the success of this project is that it is located within a continuum of support models for young lone parents. The Tipton supported housing project for young families presents a model of good practice for the development of one aspect within a range of support for young lone parents in Tallaght. Key positive features of it include:

Physical Structure/Facilities

- High standard of purpose built accommodation;
- separate accommodation units for each family;
- shared communal facilities, such as a garden and play centre (indoor and outdoor);
- onsite resource flat.

Support

- Development of peer support among tenants;
- Compulsory individual weekly key-working sessions between support worker and tenants;
- Consultation with tenants in provision of additional supports;
- Provision of optional support services, drawn from local services and agencies, such as weekly play sessions for parents and children facilitated by professional childcare workers, monthly visits by health professionals, regular nurse visits to provide sexual health advice, a Baby First Aid class and Health and Safety Sessions.

Moving On

- Positive strong relations with the local authority;
- Guarantee of independent housing for each tenant prior to leaving the project;
- Provision of floating support for ex-tenants, varying to respond to the needs of the individual.

Agency Integration

The Project Manager described the importance of linking in with local agencies who provide a range of services relevant to the needs of young lone parents, in the success of the project. This would have particular relevance in relation to the provision of additional support services within a supported housing project.

Note: A separate information pack is available, which includes the following documentation from the Tipton Supported Housing Project: an inter agency referral form,

an application form, a risk assessment form, a tenant action plan, a tenancy agreement and the job description for the support worker.

Chapter Seven *Within an Irish Context: Consultation with Local Service Providers*

7.1 Interviews with Service Providers

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from the following relevant local agencies:

- Young Families Matter;
- Teenage Parent Support Project;
- Abhaile (Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit);
- Focus Ireland (Transitional housing unit);
- South Dublin County Council.

Issues raised related to housing need and independent housing provision of young lone parents in Tallaght, the introduction of supported housing for young lone parents in Tallaght and the categories of support that would be beneficial for this group.

7.11 Defining Lone Parents

The issue of defining lone parents emerged from consultation with service providers. It was noted that some young parents may live at home with their parents, but still be in a relationship with the father of the child. For the purposes of this research, lone parents were defined as being those who were not in a relationship, as findings of previous research correlate lone parenthood with poverty, housing need and even homelessness. However, needs still exist for a young parent living at home, who is in a relationship. For example, the relationship may be in an early stage and they may not consider themselves ready to look for long term accommodation with their partner. In terms of developing a response to the needs of young lone parents, it was noted that as part of the application process, parents in such a position should be asked encouraged to consider whether or not they consider themselves to be lone parents (i.e. not currently in a serious relationship).

7.12 Housing Need

Service providers for teenage parents described how the majority of them are living in their parent's home, often in overcrowded conditions and varying circumstances:

> 'The majority of mine are living at home with their parents, some of them are quite happy to be there, some of them would love to get out of there, some of them are fulfilling the family mother role if you like and are now running the home, if the young girls mother is no longer there, maybe has left the home or in the case if the mother died and the young mother is running the home and that can be very difficult for her.'

> 'A young mother might be just lucky, very lucky to have a room to herself and in most cases she wouldn't, she would be sharing with a sibling and that can be rather difficult. With all the gear that goes with the baby.'

One interviewee described a perceived need among young parents to establish their own independent living conditions, which could emerge some time after the birth, when the individual has adapted to her role as mother,

> 'Generally they don't want to stay, they want to go and I think there is something natural about wanting to get out when you have your own baby and make your own 'nest'… I think there is a natural push for people to want to get out. Particularly after a couple of months when they settle down and they become more confident, that real desire. Even in some cases where there wouldn't be conflict and where there might be room. I have seen people have that desire anyway to move out and get their own place.

7.13 Accessing Independent Housing

Interviewees noted the significant barriers to accessing independent housing that are experienced by lone parents. These include the length of the local authority waiting list, the lack of affordable private rented accommodation and an unwillingness among private landlords to accept health board rent allowance payments. The importance for young parents of accessing accommodation close to their home, in order to be close to family and friends was also noted:

> 'The question is where do they find it, what kind of accommodation do they find? They generally do not want to go far away from where they have grown up and they want to stay among their friends and their support.'

7.14 Support Needs

Interviewees described a number of support needs of young lone parents. It was felt that such needs would vary depending on the age of the individual. This was related to a need for a level of flexibility in the development of any project that aims to respond to the needs of this group:

> There is no comparison between a 15 year and a 19 year old. You're talking about two different people and that needs to be said frequently when we're talking about teenage parents. … They are very different entities, so you can't offer a package. , you have to have it tailor made to where they are at.

Perceived support needs of young lone parents included:

- access to information and advice relating to housing and welfare entitlements;
- development of parenting skills;
- Budgeting and money management advice;
- Building self confidence;
- Accessing education or training courses;
- Accessing the labour market;
- Living skills.

Building the self esteem of clients was stressed as a particularly important aspect of support provision. Interviewees noted how young lone parents felt they had been negatively labelled by other people in their local community because of their lone parenthood status, and that this had a negative impact on their levels of self esteem:

> They can get a very hard time from everywhere and anywhere. Their confidence can be eroded while they're sitting on the bus. Their neighbours can pass comments to them that are absolutely unacceptable.

Interviewees also noted the importance of addressing every issue of concern for each individual client, of developing a holistic approach to providing support and of ensuring from the outset that clients are motivated to address any current needs.

7.15 Young Lone Parents as Young People

It was noted by one interviewee that young lone parents are also, simply, young people, with a need for social interaction among their peers.

7.16 Physical Design of Supported Housing Project

The importance of issues of boundaries and personal safety of both clients and staff in the physical design of a supported housing project was stressed.

7.2 Focus Ireland Family Transition Units: A Brief Overview

Focus Ireland Family Transition Units offer self contained accommodation for nine families in Dublin city centre. The objectives of these transition units have been defined as follows:

- 'To provide participants with good quality accommodation so that they can experience what it is like to live in a house on their own and to give them an opportunity to assess their situation and needs in a relatively stress free environment;
- to provide participants with time, space and a supportive programme that helps them to prepare to move to new accommodation and to access local community support services;
- to allow participants to benefit from group discussion with staff and other families on the programme;
- to coordinate the delivery of services provided by the local authorities and the health board to the family leaving the programme, thus providing an integrated planned approach to housing and settlement.'[15]

[15] Taken from the Focus Ireland pilot study on the mental and physical health and well being of homeless families in Dublin.

Referrals are made by a range of external voluntary and statutory bodies, as well as by other Focus Ireland homeless services. Support services provided within the project include:

- group-work sessions on personal development;
- group-work sessions on practical skills development;
- individual sessions with key workers;
- recreational and social activities;
- community living;
- licence agreement;
- a nursery service for children under five years of age.

A licence agreement is signed in place of a tenancy agreement, and states that the accommodation is transitional, i.e. for a stated period of time, that it is conditional and outlines the basis of the programme[16]. Although the maximum length of stay is nine months to one year, due to low social housing output, average length of stay has increased, so that through-put is currently at 50 per cent of the project's potential.

Clients include both lone parent families and two parent families. Lone parents are not permitted to have a partner stay within the project, as it is felt that this may disrupt the individual's involvement in the programme, which aims to stabilise often unstable, or even chaotic lifestyles. It should be noted that as all clients of this project are previously homeless, their support needs can often be different or additional to those of young lone parents in general. For example, many clients had a history of drug use and others had children who were returned to them from health board care on moving to the project. A prerequisite of those with a history of drug use is to be linked to a maintenance programme at least three months prior to coming to the project.

The importance of positive engagement and motivation to address issues of all clients was stressed, and is explored and ascertained in the referral and application process. In terms of any breach of the licence agreement by tenants, again the level of commitment

[16] This licence agreement model has never been tested legally in Ireland.

of the client to the project and to addressing their needs plays a key role in clients remaining or leaving the project.

7.3 Conclusion

Service providers' perceptions of the housing and support needs of young lone parents reflect the perceived needs of this group themselves, as emerged in the findings of the community survey and qualitative data analysis. Low social housing output is making it more and more difficult for young lone parents to access independent housing. Young lone parents need particular support in raising self confidence. The Focus Ireland Family Transition Units offers a range of support for homeless families that relate to the development of a supported housing project for young lone parents. Lessons from this model are particularly pertinent to those who may have higher needs, such as homeless lone parents and/or lone parents with a history of drug use.

Chapter Eight *Conclusion and Recommendations*

This chapter includes a discussion of all key findings which emerged from each stage of this research study, followed by recommendations arising from these findings.

8.1 Discussion of Findings

The aim of this research was to identify the housing situation and needs of young lone parents in Tallaght and recommendations by which these needs may best be met. The tasks to meet this aim included a literature review of recent relevant research and policy documents, a community survey of the housing needs young lone parents, qualitative interviews with a select sample of young lone parents, consultation with local key service providers and a study visit to a model of good practice in the UK.

8.11Definitional Issues

An initial issue of consideration is that of defining some of the key concepts used in this study, i.e. young lone parents and housing need. In terms of young lone parents, we found that definitions varied from agency to agency, with the NESF defining the age of a young lone parent as under 20 years, while others identifying up to those under 25 years. Definitions relating to lone parent status from the NESF and DSFA are both quite broad, encompassing young lone parents who have never married as well as those who are older, separated, divorced or widowed, and those with partners in prison.

Defining housing need is also a central consideration for this study. The traditional definition used in Ireland is that of local authority accommodation. Recent wider examinations of this issue identified three types of housing need: normative, referring to professional measurements, expressed referring to 'actions taken by individuals to requirements' and finally, felt, which reflects people's expectations or aspirations which may not be translated into expressed need. Importantly, the document that developed this definition states that the essential feature of housing need is that it, 'embodies some judgement as to what the minimum standard of housing people should have irrespective of their ability to pay for that housing' (Scottish Executive, 2002: 5).

8.12 Key Research Findings

A number of findings have emerged from all the methods employed, that relate to the housing needs of this group. Importantly, many of the same findings were found in each stage of the research. For example, the link between young lone parenthood and welfare dependency was a key finding from the literature review and is reflected in the community survey and qualitative interviews. Previous research also shows a relationship between single lone parenthood and a low level of qualifications and training. All of these issues negatively impede young lone parent's attempts to access independent housing.

Research shows that households headed by a single parent make up a significant proportion of the homeless population in Ireland. Overcrowding is a common experience for young lone parents, a significant feature of the community survey conducted for this study. Other young lone parents can live in temporary or homeless accommodation, or in housing in need of repair.

In terms of accessing independent housing, the private rented sector has become a unrealistic option for this group, due to increased rent prices. This is compounded in the area of Tallaght where the main type of housing available is three bedroom houses. Due to the strong relationship that exists between young lone parenthood and welfare dependency, the dominant housing option in Ireland, i.e. owner occupation, is not a realistic option for this group.

Both previous research and the primary research conducted for this study point to a number of difficulties experienced by young lone parents in accessing the preferred option of local authority housing. These include:

- being admitted onto the housing waiting list;
- length of the housing waiting list;
- lack of clear information on the operation of the waiting list, and,
- a lack in output of housing stock.

Despite the correlation between housing need and young lone parenthood, there is no specific national housing policy targeted at lone parents, their housing needs being met through all the housing options available to the general population. As noted above, social housing presents as the most realistic as well as most favoured housing option for young lone parents. However, South Dublin County Council's current strategic plan shows that social housing need will not be met over the next five years, a feature of all social housing provision and shortfall throughout the country.

Young lone parents have a number of support needs, which can vary by age. Providers of support vary from family, to statutory services, to the community/voluntary sector, to multi agency working. Recommended levels of support should vary from short term high support accommodation for teenage mothers with a history of complex problems with potential risks to the welfare of the child, to low to medium support for young mothers.

Findings from the qualitative and quantitative data collection of lone parents revealed that the following support would be considered useful:

- access to housing 'for a year or two while sorting permanent housing';
- 'Someone to explain all the housing options to me';
- Help applying for a Council home;
- Advice on social welfare and housing benefits;
- Information and advice on housing options;
- Help in finding a new home;

Data from qualitative interviews with young lone parents clearly show that the principal issue for young lone parents is accessing independent and secure accommodation. The importance of access to clear information on the operation of the SDCC housing waiting list was also raised, and in the allocation of local authority housing, the importance of providing accommodation in the individual's location of choice. These data also highlight significant barriers faced by young lone parents in accessing independent and secure housing in the private rented sector, and home ownership was clearly recognised as not being an option at all for this group.

These issues are reflected in previous research on models of good practice in the UK. These studies also reflect findings from a study visit for this study, which highlights the following features of a best practice model of supported housing for young lone parents. This model would relate to one aspect of a continuum of support services for young lone parents, as this continuum approach emerged as one of the crucial success factors of the study visit project.

Physical Structure/Facilities

- High standard of purpose built accommodation with separate accommodation units for each family, shared communal facilities, such as a garden and play centre (indoor and outdoor) and an onsite resource flat.

Support

- Compulsory individual weekly key-working sessions between support worker and tenants, consultation with tenants in provision of additional supports, provision of optional support services, drawn from local services and agencies, such as weekly play sessions for parents and children facilitated by professional childcare workers, monthly visits by health professionals, regular nurse visits to provide sexual health advice, a Baby First Aid class and Health and Safety Sessions and development of peer support among tenants.

Moving On

- Developing positive strong relations with the local authority, guarantee of independent housing for each tenant prior to leaving the project, provision of floating support for ex-tenants, varying to respond to the needs of the individual.

One UK study noted the crucial importance of finding a balance between independence and support in the development of a housing support project, something that also emerged in the study visit for this research. Another finding of this research is that of establishing a housing support project within the local community of clients.

Respondents displayed a strong connection to their local community, citing issues such as family, friends, school of child, place of employment or training, as well as it simply 'being home'.

There is a strong policy background to address the housing and supported housing needs of young lone parents in Tallaght. The National Anti Poverty Strategy stresses the correlation between poverty and lone parenthood and in particular emphasises the important bearing of the availability of childcare on the extent to which lone parents are dependent on social welfare payments.

In summary, there is a strong correlation between unmet housing need and single lone parenthood in Tallaght, which relates to a low level of social housing output in the area. Young lone parents would benefit from a wide range of support options and it has emerged that a supported housing project would mark a significant step in responding to the housing and support needs of some young lone parents. However, it is evident there is a need for a significantly higher level of social housing output, that includes a range of housing type that reflects the size and nature of family units presenting, in order for the issue of unmet housing need among young lone parents to be fully met.

8.2 Recommendations

8.21 Relationship between local voluntary services, the SDCC and the Health Board- A Consortium Approach

Recommendation 1 In recognition of the values of a multi-agency approach to tackling housing need in a local area, we recommend that the current research advisory committee continues to meet in the capacity of a consortium to forward the development of the following recommendations. This approach ensures avoidance of any duplication of service provision and smooth referral of recognised need to the appropriate service.

8.22 Information and Advice on Housing Options and Support Services Available to Young Lone Parents

Recommendation 2 Information

South Dublin County Council should provide clear and user friendly information on the local authority housing options available to young lone parents, and the procedures involved in accessing these housing options. Staff should be trained in providing clear information and advice to young lone parents.

Recommendation 3 Information

Local agencies should be proactive in the provision and dissemination of clear information on all housing options available to young lone parents, both local authority and private rented sector housing.

8.23 Childcare, Education and Training

Recommendation 4 Childcare

SWAHB: In line with the objectives of the National Anti Poverty Strategy, efforts should be made to increase the level of financed childcare facilities in the Tallaght region.

Recommendation 5 Education and Training

Local Service Providers: Services working with lone parents should continue to encourage and assist them in accessing education and training courses.

Department of Education and Science: As recommended in the Evaluation of the Teen Parents Support Initiative, we recommend the development of a national funding scheme delivered through education and training sectors, to financially support young parents with the expenses of participation in education and training, most especially childcare costs.

8.24 Lack of Housing Options – Local Authority Output and the Private Rented Sector

Recommendation 6 Defining Homelessness *Department of the Environment and Local Government:* We recommend that, as in the UK, young lone parents who are living with their parents, in overcrowded conditions, should be identified as being homeless.

Recommendation 7 Development of housing policy specific for young lone parents

There is currently no specific national housing policy for lone parents, despite the strong relationship between local authority housing and lone parenthood. We recommend that a specific housing policy be developed to respond to the needs of this group, which should result in a higher diversity of housing types available.

Recommendation 8 Supplementary Welfare Allowances

Department of Social and Family Affairs: Supplementary Rent Allowances should be increased in order to reflect current rent levels in the private rented sector

Recommendation 9 – Introduction of Rent Controls

Department of the Environment and Local Government: Rent controls should be introduced to private rented accommodation rent prices, in order to curb raising rent levels in the sector.

Recommendation 10 Type of Social Housing Stock Available

South Dublin County Council: South Dublin County Council should continue to use housing waiting lists as a guide to the type of housing need, in terms of household size.

Recommendation 11 Level of Social Housing Stock Output

In order for the development of any support and housing support services for young lone parents to act as an effective response to the housing needs of this group, there is a need for a significant increase in the level of social housing output in the South Dublin County Council area. Without this, access to suitable move on independent accommodation will be impossible.

8.25 The Development of a Continuum of Care in Support Services Provision

Recommendation 12 – Choice in Provision of Services: A Continuum of Care

All involved statutory and voluntary service providers: Research shows that a range of support services, within a continuum of care, should be provided, in order to respond to the varying levels of support needs experienced by young lone parents. In line with this,

we recommend that a range of services are provided, in order to respond to a range of needs. Each aspect of support provision in a continuum of care is outlined below.

Recommendation 13 Low Support (Level One)

All Involved Statutory and Voluntary Agencies:

- A *floating support worker* should be employed when tenants begin to move on from the project. This will ensure that a successful transition is made from transitional housing to independent living for tenants.
- A drop in centre should be established, through which young lone parents may access advice and information on housing and other relevant issues, such as childcare, education and training courses.

Recommendation 14 Medium Support (Level Two) The development of a Transitional Supported Housing Unit for Young Lone Parents in Tallaght

All Involved Statutory and Voluntary Agencies:

R 14.1 Referral Process

Referrals can be made from relevant local services, such as the homeless advice unit, the teenage parent's initiative and the county council. This would be facilitated by the Consortium approach the development of the service. An example of a referral form is in Appendix B.

R 14.2 The Application Process

The application process should involve a representative from the housing project meeting this prospective tenant in their own home (a method which worked successfully in our study visit project), to explain what the project offered, their rights and responsibilities as tenants and to respond to any queries or concerns they may have. This should be followed by an informal interview with the prospective tenant in the project itself, during which an application form is completed (see Appendix B for example).

R 14.3 Number of Family Households within Project

Research shows that tenants of a housing project can fear stigma from local residents. Also, a finding that emerged from our study visit is that an advantage of a small scale housing project is that it can foster the development of peer support and community spirit. The development of a smaller scale project may also play a role in appeasing any local community resistance. However, the extremity of the level of housing need among young lone parents in Tallaght (who make up 55% of the housing waiting list) leads to a need for a response that will reflect this need. We recommend that the number of families accommodated in this project should not exceed twelve.

R 14.4 Physical Design of the Project

It is recommended that the physical design of the project reflects key aspects of the study visit project, which include:

- High standard of purpose built accommodation;
- Separate, completely self-contained accommodation units for each family;
- shared communal facilities, such as a garden and play centre (indoor and outdoor);
- an onsite resource flat.

R 14.5 Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants: Tenancy Agreements

Tenancy agreements should be signed by all tenants. This would inform them of both their rights (including grievance procedures) and responsibilities as tenants of the project, and provide a sense of security for them in their tenure.

R 14.6 Rights and Responsibilities

- *Letting Partners Stay*

Young lone parents who are not in a relationship are the target of this supported housing model. However, it needs to be recognised also that young parents are also young people and may over the course of their stay in the project, become involved in a relationship. Lone parent status of tenants cannot be expected to remain static. It is important that a balance is found between recognising this and awareness of the fact that some parents may become involved in relationships that are detrimental to addressing their current

needs through support provided. As this housing project will provide low to medium support, and research (including primary data collection conducted here) has stressed the importance of creating a balance between support and independence, it is recommended that in the case that a tenant becomes involved in a relationship, their partner should be allowed to stay in the housing project with them, thus becoming tenants of it themselves. The well being of the tenant (and other tenants) in relation to this arrangement should be monitored through the key-working system.

- *Drugs Policy*

It is recommended that a drugs policy is developed and agreed by all clients as part of the tenancy agreement. Those with a history of drug use should be on a methadone maintenance programme and exhibit a commitment to remaining on it.

- *Local Community*

The tenancy agreement should state that tenants agree to regard the rights of the local community. This issue should extend to the visitors of tenants also.

- *Grievance Procedure*

It is recommended that a grievance process is put in place for tenants.

- *Consultation in Development of Support*

Tenants should be consulted in relation to the development or introduction of any additional support services in the housing project.

R 14.7 Age Cohort of Tenants

The supported housing project should be available for young lone parents aged between 18 years and 25 years. Consideration should be given to including those over this age group if it is considered appropriate by referral agencies, due to their experience of additional needs such as having a physical or mental disability.

R 14.8 Staff

For a supported housing project of nine families, staff should include:

- One project leader;
- One project worker;

The floating support worker referred to in R14.7 can link in with tenants on leaving the project. Level of involvement here would vary, from high support, to none at all, depending on the family's level of need.

R 14.9 Local Community

Resistance from the local community may arise in the development of a supported housing project for young lone parents. Attempts to assuage this should include:

- provision of clear information about the nature of the service;
- Attendance to resident's committees to discuss resident's concerns with them.

R 14.10 Length of Stay

Due to the low level of social housing output, the maximum length of stay should be two years, in order to ensure that tenants access independent accommodation upon leaving the project.

Recommendation 15 High Support (Level Three)

Some young parents, for example some of those who are homeless, who are currently substance dependent and have no motivation to stop using drugs, have high support needs that could not adequately be met within the above housing project. Consultation with service providers highlighted the need for **long term high support accommodation** for young parents with such high support needs.

Recommendation 16 Support for Young Lone Parents under 18 years

South Western Area Health Board:

Local authorities cannot provide housing for young lone parents under the age of 18 years. This group fall under the care of local health boards. There is currently no provision for young lone parents in this age group in housing need. We recommend that

the South Western Area Health Board identify the housing and related support needs of this group and provide a service in response to these needs.

8.26 Further Research

Recommendation 17 Young Couples

Though this issue is outside of the remit of this research, many young parents may still be involved in a relationship with the father of the child, or have started a new relationship. However, needs still arise for young couples, in terms of accessing both housing and support. There is a need for research into the needs of low income young couples.

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