

Press Release

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Everybody Knows... challenging common myths about one-parent families in Ireland

A new information pack illustrates the reality of life for Ireland's 189,000 lone parents and their 310,000 children.

OPEN, the country's largest lone parent support organisation, has today (October 17) published a new facts pack which aims to dispel myths about one-parent families in Ireland. The publication has been released to coincide with the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Wednesday 17 October) and was funded by the Combat Poverty Agency and The Equality Authority, through the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

As well as facts and figures about one-parent families, "*Everybody knows...*" also contains direct testimony from lone parents about their lives:

'Stephen', a father of three describes being "*...faceless, nameless – only a number in a big office discussing your business*"; 'Mary', a mother of one describes her mixed feelings of pride and worry when her son was chosen for the Community Games as "*....I know it will cost money somehow and I can't afford it*"

Commenting on the publication, Camille Loftus of OPEN said "'Everybody knows' is a catch phrase often used to preface incorrect information about one-parent families in Ireland; for example, 'Everybody knows that most lone parents are young ones who have loads of children to get more benefits'; however as our facts pack shows less than 2% are under 20 years of age and 60% of all lone parents have just one child". "In examining levels of poverty", Loftus continued, "what emerges is a stark picture of one-parent families continuously living in debt just to put food on the table and a huge reliance on public housing lists and allowances". "The development of this pack we hope will allow for a much needed reality check about one-parent families and in turn lead to the provision of supports which are based on what these families actually need and deserve" concluded Ms. Loftus.

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Note to Editors:

The OPEN '*Everybody Knows...*' information pack takes the form of a wallet which consists of brief information sheets detailing official statistics about one-parent families including a focus on the areas of poverty, employment and accommodation as well as commentary from lone parents. The wallet is being distributed among OPEN's 92 member groups, as well as local partnerships, national organisations and universities. The statistics contained in the wallet as well as county-by-county statistics are available on www.oneparent.ie.

OPEN is the network of lone parent groups in the Republic of Ireland. The organisation is made up of community-based groups which provide a range of supports and services to almost 15,000 one-parent families annually.

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