



Breaking parents' poverty trap – help is out there

Nearly one in five families affected

by Una Rice

I imagine worrying about where the next meal for the kids will come from, or having to send them to bed on an empty stomach.

Imagine knowing that the kids need new shoes or extra clothes, but you can't afford it – again.

Imagine having to explain to the kids you just can't get together the fees for school swimming or other extra events their classmates are doing.

Imagine you can't get out to work because the childcare fees are extortionate and there's no partner on hand to look after the kids.

It's a poverty trap alright – and unbelievably it's happening right here in Ireland – and it could be happening to a family near you.

There are almost 190,000 lone parent families in Ireland – which is almost one in five families. And although it's not just lone parent families who can be affected by poverty, the statistics show nearly one in three lone parent families bear the brunt when it comes to trying to sustain a decent standard

of living... they can't even muster together the basics most of us take for granted.

"There is an idea that lone parents get everything, that it's a good deal. But in actual fact, stats from the central office of statistics show the opposite," says Camille Loftus, who's Head of Policy & Research at OPEN (One Parent Exchange and Network).

"Of all the lone parent families in Ireland, 10

CALLING ALL LONE PARENTS: We would love to hear from single mums and single dads on a special feature on lone parents. Please write to Una Rice with your stories/details at the usual *Woman's Way* address

Want to set up a local support group in your area?

OPEN (One Parent Exchange and Network), the national network of lone parent groups, have revised their Group Kit which is now available to lone parents wishing to set up a local support group.

OPEN's Group Kit was first developed in 1998 in response to the need for an educational and developmental tool for local lone parent groups to guide and support their development. It has also been used by women's and traveller groups in Ireland and abroad.

The kit is presented in 10 step-by-step units aimed at guiding groups on how to set up, structure and run a lone parent group.

If you're an OPEN member group, the kit and support in its implementation are free. The kit is also available to non-member groups and organisations at a cost of €30 inclusive of post and packaging within the Republic of Ireland. For more information, tel: 01 814 8860, visit www.oneparent.ie or email: enquiries@oneparent.ie.

OPEN is based at 7 Red Cow Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7.



per cent live in what is called multi-family households – which is like a lone parent living in her own family home.

"At first glance it looks like a good thing but it can have its downsides.

"Nearly four out of 10 families in need of social housing are lone parent families and more than half of them wait for three years.

"You meet so many parents, who are so motivated and focused on ensuring their kids' lives are better, but their experience of poverty is disproportionate to the rest of the population. It's one family type carrying this burden."

There are other misconceptions about lone families. "It's important to stress most single people were in a relationship – stable or non-married – and they subsequently became lone parents," says Camille. "Very few are aged 20 or under."

OPEN is the national network of lone parent self-help groups and represents one-parent families.

It has 92 community based groups providing a range of supports and services to almost 15,000 one-parent families throughout Ireland.

Try these tasty tips for toddlers!

Toddlers and mealtimes can often present a challenge – there's never a dull moment at the dinner table, is there?

So the Flora Institute has launched a Healthy Eating Guide aimed specifically at toddlers.

It contains lots of useful gems and tips on correct portion sizes, the main food that plays a key part in your toddler's diet, plus meal planners and menu suggestions. Tel: 1850 409 172 for your free copy.

...and do try this at home

- ✓ Avoid rewarding good behaviour with a sweet treat – instead use stars, stickers or badges
- ✓ If your kids are not fans of milk, try adding it to mashed potatoes and soups – they'll never know the difference
- ✓ Fat is an essential part of the diet and is important for proper growth and development. Children under five should not be given low-fat foods



- ✓ Fish is a natural source of omega 3 fats, which are important for brain development in babies prenatally and in early postnatal life. Adding salmon to potato cakes, for example, is a good way of including a boost of omega 3 in your toddler's current diet

Read all about it!

So your child has done well at his reading this year in school. But how you can build upon that at home, and keep his reading levels up to speed? Try these tips over the summer:

- Join the library. Make a habit of taking your child there one morning a week on his summer holidays to choose a couple of books
- Make a cosy book area at home.

This could be a soft chair in a well lit corner, next to the bookcase. Encourage your child to use the reading area and turn off the telly so that he can enjoy the peace



- When books are used, swap with friends, but keep favourites he can grow up with like the Dr Seuss books or children's classics
- Get your child to write a review of a favourite book and send it to Una Rice at *Woman's Way*. We will print a selection of them in the coming weeks

The Thin BLUE LINE

by Sinéad Fagan

The diary of an unexpected yummy mummy

Six weeks. Everyone keeps on saying six is the magic number. Six weeks is supposedly the time when babies finally begin to develop some sort of routine. I have the date marked out on the calendar, so as soon as Jamie turns six-weeks-old, I'm clinging on to the hope that everything will miraculously become a lot easier.

There is no rhyme or reason to anything Jamie does at the minute, I never know from one minute to the next when he's going to sleep or feed or for how long – I am at the complete mercy of his erratic schedule.

I can hardly go anywhere or do anything; even having a shower or drinking a cup of tea is a major feat. I've barely managed to step foot outside the front door.

Last Saturday night I was in bed at 7.30pm trying to catch up on some sleep – just a year ago I would have been out on the tiles – how life has really changed!

Jamie is going through a growth spurt at the minute so he may as well be permanently attached to my boob. The other day just after feeding him, I felt some hard skin brushing against my arm, then I realised it was my nipple – it's now a callous.

Yes, I have one seriously hungry baby on my hands; his cheeks are definitely becoming more pudgin' like by the day.

Aside from all the eating; he hardly ever sleeps. I recently read in a book that newborns only wake for about four hours out of every 24. If only!

I suppose I should be glad that my child is a non-conformist, but surely he could have waited a few months before asserting his individuality.

I should have expected it really; when I was pregnant, he never stopped kicking and jiggling around, even the midwives and doctors at the clinic commented on it.

God knows where he gets his energy from, but he could party with the best of them.

There is no way I would be coping at the moment without the extra help I'm getting from my family, especially my mother.

She reckons that we soon forget all the ups and downs of the first month or two; that it's Mother Nature's way of ensuring we go on to have more children. So, when that six-week mark comes around, all of my current woes will miraculously fade away...



cut out

READER DISCOUNT AT LADYBIRD

Ladybird has opened its tenth store in Ireland, so get thee down to Blanchardstown! The shop has great feeding facilities and interactive play areas to keep the kids amused. What I love most about Ladybird though are the prices. It's great looking summer gear and all very affordable. Plus, they have a 10 per cent discount for readers of *Woman's Way*, valid until the end July 2007.

Simply present this coupon at the Blanchardstown store to get your 10 per cent. Photocopies will not be accepted.

The discount excludes all products currently discounted or on promotion, and prams and cots.

EXPIRES 31 JULY



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