



Press Release

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FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES ARE A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN MORE COMPLEX SOCIETY

- Delivery of 100 resource centres celebrated

The national network of Family Resource Centres is now a critical infrastructure in the delivery of family support and community development around the country.

According to the Chairperson of the Family Resource Centre National Forum, Packie Kelly, "it is incumbent on Government to commit to continued and increased resources for these centres if the social and community provisions in the new National Development Plan are to be realised."

Mr Kelly was addressing a celebratory-conference to mark the delivery of 100 family resource centres which took place in Croke Park Stadium, today (6/02/07). The event was organised by the Family Resource Centre National Forum and the Family Support Agency, which is the statutory agency charged with supporting the family.

"The needs of the family are becoming more diverse and complex. The demise of the extended family support network and the increase in women's participation in the workforce has resulted in families looking to their community to meet childcare needs. In response to this, many family resource centres now act as the biggest and most accessible childcare service-providers in communities, especially in urban areas.

"The new National Development Plan sets high targets in the provision of affordable, assessable and quality childcare. Over the past five years in particular, family resource centres have identified best-practice and innovation in childcare provision. For this reason, the Government must invest in building capacity within family resource centres so that we can extend our model of accessible childcare to all communities.

"The ambitious target of 50,000 new childcare places by 2010 that are set out in the NDP will only be delivered through co-operation with the national network of Family Resource Centres.

"Beyond the issue of childcare, Family Resource Centres are increasingly involved in family mediation, dealing with rural isolation and developing community responses to the drugs problems.

"In an increasingly diverse society, we are playing an important role in combating discrimination and intolerance in communities. To this end, we very much welcome the EU initiative to designate 2007 as the Year of Equality for All.

"With yesterday's launch of the Irish programme to promote this year, we are hopeful that more consideration will be given to investing in equality programmes, as well as policies and programmes that recognise diversity in families. Rather than penalising families because they don't fit the traditional description of the family, we must support them to prevent poverty and disadvantage. As it stands, many of the disadvantaged groups who access the supports of family resource centres are lone parents," said Mr Kelly.

Over the past six months, eleven new family resource centres have been established bringing the national complement to 100. To this end, the targets for the provision of family resource centres in the last NDP have been met. "The important role which family resource centres play in supporting families and communities has been recognised by the Family Support Agency and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Now that the infrastructure for community development is in place, we hope that it will be supported into the future so that disadvantage can be addressed appropriately at a local level," he added.

Today's event was also addressed by the Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan, TD; the Director of Combat Poverty, Helen Johnson; the Director of CORI, Sean Healy and the CEO of the Family Support Agency, Pat Bennett. During the event, the Chairperson of the Family Support Agency, Michael O'Kennedy presented over 200 volunteers attached to family resource centres with 'volunteer pins' in recognition of the role which they have played in supporting community development in their local area.

In his address to the event, Pat Bennett of the Family Support Agency said, "the Family Support Agency is very pleased to be supporting the work of 100 family resource centres. We recognise that each resource centre offers supports based on local need: in urban areas this often centres on childcare provision, responses to drugs problems and adult education. Meanwhile, in rural areas, many centres are responding to issues such as rural isolation and male unemployment. This community development approach to supporting families and communities is vital, and it is likely that the role of family resource centres will grow in importance over the coming decade as our society becomes more diverse.

"The Family Support Agency is particularly pleased at the level of voluntary engagement in the delivery of programmes offered by individual family resource centres. A 2005 study by NEXUS into the operation of family resource centres showed that for every four staff employed, there was one volunteer post. This is a relatively high ratio, and the role in which volunteers play in informing the work programmes of resource centres cannot be underestimated. A big part of today's event is recognising that work.

"The Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan, has prioritised support for family resource centres through the Family Support Agency. We believe that his commitment and confidence in family resource centres has delivered very positive results for communities," added Mr Bennett.

ENDS.

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