

PRESS RELEASE

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FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES TO BECOME SIGNIFICANT VOICE IN FUTURE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Family resource centres will become more vocal in highlighting policies and initiatives that can support families in dealing with issues such as childcare, teen services and supports for lone parents.

According to the Family Resource Centre National Forum, which launched a three-year strategy in Dublin today (21.06.06), family resource centres are now the main vehicle for delivering community development and family support.

The strategic plan '*Supporting Families, Building Communities*' was officially launched by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan, TD. The Chairperson of the Family Support Agency, Michael O'Kennedy, also addressed the launch.

There are currently 89 family resource centres operating throughout the country. By the end of 2006, this will rise to 100 as part of the roll-out of the National Development Plan.

Family resource centres offer a diverse range of support and initiatives aimed at combating disadvantage and enhancing the function of the family unit. Homework clubs, pre-school care facilities, welfare advice, counselling and parenting advice are among the diverse initiatives available at centres.

According to the Chairperson of the National Forum, Packie Kelly, "the emergence of family resource centres over the past decade is a direct response to the growth in diversity of the family unit in terms of size, structure, supports and needs. It is also a response to the pressures that face families in terms of commuting to work, accessing childcare and participating in training and education.

"Our three-year Strategic Plan sets out key areas of growth and policy development which will give us a much stronger voice at local and national fora. To help promote more family-friendly policies and initiatives, we will be participating on an increased number of policy-formation bodies, and seeking representation on Government advisory committees. Issues including childcare provision and support for vulnerable and disadvantaged families will be central to our work.

“Since 1998 with the establishment of our National Forum, we have created a model for collaboration and communication across 89 family resource centres. This includes regional support networks. Under our Strategic Plan, we intend to enhance our collaboration to ensure effective sharing of best-practice and policy.

“By 2009, we expect to have strengthened our voice and role to such an extent that we will be considered as an essential player in the social partnership process.

“Of course the future capacity of family resource centres – and the National Forum – depends on funding. We have set ourselves ambitious targets in supporting the complex and ever-changing needs of the family. The next government will play a central role in ensuring we have the capacity to meet these targets.

“Over the coming months, all of the political parties who are considering a possible role in the formation of Government should not ignore the substantial needs of communities and families. To this end, supporting the role of family resource centres should be a lynch-pin of community and family policies in political manifestos,” added Packie Kelly.

ENDS.

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