



**OVER 850,000 PEOPLE VISIT FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES NATIONWIDE
TO USE FACILITIES AND RECEIVE ADVICE & SUPPORTS**

**MINISTER PLEDGES NUMBER OF RESOURCE CENTRES TO INCREASE BY
OVER 40 TO 142 UNDER €190m INVESTMENT IN FAMILY FOCUSED
SERVICES**

***AS NEW CENTRE OPENS IN BALLINA, FIGURES SHOW OVER 67,000
PEOPLE IN CO. MAYO BENEFITING DIRECTLY FROM WELFARE SUPPORTS
& ENTITLEMENTS***

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., confirmed today that an investment package of almost EUR190 million will be targeted directly at increasing the number of Family Resource Centres countrywide from the current 100 locations to 142 inside the next seven years.

Minister Brennan was speaking in Co. Mayo when officially opening the Ballina Family Resource Centre, one of four resource centres in Mayo who now receive funding from the Department of Social and Family Affairs through the Family Support Agency.

Minister Brennan also released figures which show the full extent of the numbers of people availing of the services and supports of the Family Resource Centres. In 2005 alone -

- There were 850,000 visits to use centre facilities
- Some 16,000 people completed training courses
- Almost 140,000 people received advice, support and information



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The Minister said the pledge to increase the number of Family Resource Centres by six per year over the next seven years - bringing the total number in the country to 142 by 2013 - was at the centre of the commitment to continue providing family focused social inclusion services in areas where communities are experiencing disadvantages.

The funding for the additional 42 centres will be drawn from an overall investment of EUR861 million to further support communities under the second National Development Plan 2007-2013. The Minister said as part of this initiative, the Family Support Agency will work to ensure a more cohesive approach to the delivery of family focused social inclusion services provided through Family Resource Centres.

Minister Brennan said: "Family Resource Centres have a pivotal role to play in empowering people in disadvantaged communities by directly involving them in decisions which affect them on a daily basis, and in providing the facilities and supports which allows them to develop their own skills, knowledge and experience to build fulfilling futures for themselves and their families. The resource centres are now at the very coalface of reaching out and assisting people and families towards more fulfilling lives, free from poverty, neglect, harm, discrimination and abuse. They are providing stepping stones out of deprivation and social exclusion and helping to build lives shaped by our values of equality, opportunity for all and social justice. The fact that each year over 850,000 visits are made to centres is a resounding endorsement of how they have become beacons of hope for so many who are struggling to rise above disadvantage, the stresses of modern living and to escape from lives that are



Department of Social and Family Affairs

often blunted because of inadequate education, restrictions on personal development and a lack of opportunity".

Minister Brennan also confirmed that funding for Ballina Family Resource was increased over 25% from EUR79,780 in 2006 to EUR100,160 this year.

Minister Brennan paid a particular tribute to the role of volunteers in the success of Family Resource Centres. "I would like to add my gratitude to the many thousands of people throughout the country who give up their free time to support a huge range of voluntary and community groups. No amount of funding could hope to replace the work that volunteers undertake every day in every corner of Ireland".

Minister Brennan said: "The services provided by Ballina Family Resource Centre, along with the centres in Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis and Westport are a practical response to the real local needs of the communities serviced by the centres. All of the dedication and commitment shown at local level is, of course, inspired by a vision of change for the good of the community and society in general".

Minister Brennan also unveiled statistics for the numbers of people in Co. Mayo who are benefiting from welfare entitlements and supports. In total, about 67,700 benefit, including some 36,000 people on a variety of welfare support schemes and 15,555 families who receive Child Benefit on behalf of 32,022 children. A breakdown of the welfare schemes includes 8,600 on unemployment or jobseekers payments; 10,300 (State Pensions), 450 (Pre-Retirement Pension), 1,700 (Illness Benefit) 4,600 (Disability payments), 4,100 (Widow's & Widower's



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Pensions), 1,750 (One-Parent Family Payment), 800 (Supplementary Welfare Allowance), 1,500 (Carer's Benefit/Allowance).

Press Release Ends