



Grandparents provide a multitude of supports for families experiencing divorce or separation - Hanafin

Many sacrifices made by Grandparents in helping their adult children and their grandchildren at a difficult time in their lives

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, **Mary Hanafin T.D.** today (*23rd November 2009*) launched the first study conducted in Ireland on the role of Grandparents in divorced and separated families at Trinity College Dublin.

The report which was written by Virpi Timonen, Martha Doyle and Ciara O'Dwyer of the **Social Policy and Aging Research Centre at Trinity College** was funded by the **Family Support Agency**. The main aim of the report is to gain a deeper understanding of how intergenerational relationships are affected by divorce or separation by the 'middle' generation. The research also explores the various roles played by grandparents in their children's and grandchildren's lives after divorce or separation.

Speaking to guests at the launch today, Minister Hanafin said, **"we are all acutely aware of the devastating effect that the breakdown of family relationships has on all generations of the family concerned. This report highlights just how significant the role of grandparents is, in a situation where relationships have broken down and there are children involved. It shows us the level of support that grandparents offer to families experiencing family breakdown by way of financial assistance, emotional support and advice, housing and childcare."**

Minister Hanafin continued, **"a striking feature of the findings in this report is the positive influence that grandparents**



have on their grandchildren at this difficult time. Grandparents, it has found, are a stabilising force in the lives of their grandchildren, striving to normalise the situation for children and acting as 'peacemakers' and 'bridge-builders' between the generations."

The Minister went on to say the study will contribute to the thinking of policy makers and service providers involved in helping couples separating, in terms of potential supports available to them and their children as well as implications for supporting the grandparents.

"Supporting families at all stages of their lives and through possible difficult periods which can affect them from time to time, such as separation and divorce, is at the core of the work of the Family Support Agency and the Family Mediation Service and is something that the Government continues to develop."

Minister Hanafin commended the authors of the report Virpi Timonen, Martha Doyle and Ciara O'Dwyer and Elena Moore for the extensive research that has been undertaken for the production of this comprehensive report. She also thanked the Family Support Agency for lending their support to such a worthwhile piece of research.

ENDS

Notes for Editor:

The Family Support Agency

The Family Support Agency, which is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, brings together programmes and services introduced by the Government which are designed to promote local family support, to support ongoing parenting relationships for children and help prevent marital breakdown.

In addition to their research function, the Family Support Agency supports 107 Family Resource Centres (FRCs) nationwide and funds the Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations providing



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marriage, child and bereavement counselling. The Agency also provides a direct Family Mediation Service.

Family Mediation Service

The Family Mediation Service is a free, professional, confidential service which enables couples, married and non-married, who have decided to separate, or divorce and who together want to negotiate the terms of their separation or divorce with the help of a trained mediator. It assists couples to address the issues on which they need to make decisions including; post-separation living arrangements, finances and parenting arrangements to enable children to have an ongoing relationship with each parent.

The Family Mediation Service can also assist in other family issues such as grandparent access to grandchildren post separation.