



NUMBER OF FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES TO INCREASE BY OVER 40 TO 142 UNDER EUR190m INVESTMENT IN FAMILY FOCUSED SERVICES

MINISTER BRENNAN - *MORE THAN 850,000 VISITS TO RESOURCE CENTRES IN 2005 SHOWS PIVOTAL ROLE THEY HAVE TO PLAY AS BEACONS OF HOPE FOR THOSE CONFRONTING DISADVANTAGE*

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today unveiled details of an investment package of almost EUR190 million that 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.

Under the EUR187 million plan the aim is 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 - with a particular emphasis of continuing to provide the 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.



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Minister Brennan announced details of the expansion programme when delivering the keynote address at a special conference in Dublin to mark and celebrate Ireland's 100 Family Resource Centres. The event, organised by the Family Resource Centre National Forum and the Family Support Agency, showcased the work of family resource centres including childcare services, adult training and education, disability supports and promoting tolerance in increasingly diverse communities.

The Minister said Family Resource Centres had 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.

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 and information

The first family resource centres were funded 22 years ago and this was followed by a Government Commitment to establish 100 centres by the end of 2006, which has now been achieved. Direct funding for the resource centre programme has increased from EUR300,000 in 1994 to almost EUR19 million this year. The investment of almost EUR190 million under the new NDP will ensure the further



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development and expansion of the resource centre programme, while at the same time gradually increasing the number of centres to 142.

Minister Brennan said: "Family 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 last year alone some 850,000 visits were made to centres is a resounding endorsement of how the centres 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 often blunted because of inadequate education, restrictions on personal development and a lack of opportunity".

Minister Brennan added: "This year the Government is committing almost EUR19 million to supporting family resource centres and the new NDP has provided the supports that will see the service blossom further throughout the country. But the valuable role of the centres cannot be measured in financial terms alone. In many ways we will never know the full story of the thousands of lives that have been changed for the better, the families whose lives have been transformed, and the many who have had their dignity restored. The services provided by the centres are so often emotional and practical lifelines for those who may be going through particularly traumatic situations and experiencing a range of problems that can combine to leave them feeling isolated and voiceless."

Minister Brennan paid a particular tribute to the role of volunteers in the success of Family Resource Centres. "I would like to add my thanks to the many hundreds of people throughout the country who give up their free time to support



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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”.

Press Release Ends