



Minister Cullen marks 21 years of the Family Mediation Service

Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen TD, this evening (Tuesday 11 September 2007) attended a reception to mark the 21st anniversary of the Family Mediation Service. This Service, set up originally as a three-year pilot programme in 1986 by Government, is now a core part of the work of the **Family Support Agency** - which aims to promote family and community well being through the provision of supports and services to families. The Family Support Agency is responsible for over €35 million of Government funding to support families in 2007.

The Agency's **Family Mediation Service** is a free, confidential and professional service for 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. The Service assists separating couples to address the areas on which they need to make decisions including post-separation living arrangements, finances and parenting. The Family Mediation Service now has a staff of 56 covering 16 offices around the country and supporting some 1,500 couples per year.

Speaking this evening, **Minister Martin Cullen** said: "With the pace of life today in Irish cities and towns and the demands and pressures on important family and community linkages, it has become more difficult for people to maintain strong and stable relationships. Separation and divorce, while thankfully not at levels in other countries, are nonetheless on the increase. While the Government's family policy is rightly focused on promoting family stability, we also recognise that couples who have decided to separate also need support in what is often a time of extreme stress".



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Cullen added: "It is important too that children continue to benefit from stability and continuity in their family life and from a regular and close relationship with both parents. This is one of the key outcomes from mediation and I am delighted that the Family Mediation Service has grown – especially under the Family Support Agency – into a truly national service".

Thanking the Chairperson of the Board of the Family Support Agency, Michael O’Kennedy and the staff who work within the Family Mediation Service, Minister Cullen said: "It is important that we continue to progress in this area. That is why I am happy that the Family Support Agency is to commission a review of the Family Mediation Service to assess the contribution of the Service at this opportune time, in supporting families experiencing relationship breakdown and to make recommendations for the future development of the Service".

For more information on the work of the Family Support Agency and the Family Mediation Service, please access the following website www.fsa.ie or call 01 6114100.

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