



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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### **Minister Announces Government Target Of 100 Family Resource Centres By End Of 2006 Will Be Delivered**

#### **Brennan Says Local Groups Have Pivotal Role In Helping People During Traumatic & Stressful Times**

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., said today that local community groups around the country have a pivotal role to play in helping to addressing the needs of men, women and children in their locality who may be going through particularly stressful times in their lives.

Minister Brennan was speaking when performing the official opening of the Knockmay Family Resource Centre in Portlaoise, Co. Laois which provides a range of community support services and links to advice agencies and groups.

Minister Brennan announced that the target set by the Government under the National Development Plan of funding 100 Family Resource Centres by the end of 2006 will be delivered. There are currently 88 core-funded groups in the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, with an additional three Resource Centres having recently signed contracts with the Agency. A further 9 groups have already been approved for inclusion in the Programme. Funding for the Programme has increased substantially from €317,500 in 1994 to over €12.9 million in 2006.

Minister Brennan said: "The Government recognises the critically important contribution that Resource Centres make to combating disadvantage and reaching out to the vulnerable and marginalised. The services provided by community resource groups are often emotional and practical lifelines for those who may be going through particularly traumatic situations and experiencing a range of problems that combine to leave them feeling isolated and powerless".

In Portlaoise, Minister Brennan also visited the Social Welfare Branch Office and Investigators Office, the Citizen's Information Centre and the town's Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) office. He announced that almost 28,000 people in Co. Laois, including some 16,000 children, are now benefiting directly from a range of welfare supports and entitlements. The total of 27,676 welfare beneficiaries includes 16,565 children in receipt of Child Benefit, Unemployment Payments (2,014), Old Age Pensions (2,774), Retirement Pension(957), Disability Benefit/Allowance (1,723), Widow's & Widower's Pensions (1,675), One-Parent Family Payment (902), Supplementary Welfare Allowance (314), Carer's Benefit/Allowance (336) and Family Income Supplement (257).

The opening of the Knockmay Family Resource Centre is the culmination of an extensive process of consultation, planning, lobbying, campaigning and fundraising. The Knockmay area has a population of 770, of which over 400 are aged under 18 years. Funding to date through the Family Support Agency has been more than €134,000.

The Resource Centre's activities include the provision of:

- childcare facilities
- management of project premises



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- focused courses at suitable times for adults in the community
- a youth club for young people that focuses on their development
- encouraging and enabling men in the community to meet together and participate in the social and educational programmes
- space for support groups, e.g. older people, parent & toddler group and women's groups
- an information point by raising awareness among people about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements as well as practical information about courses and work opportunities
- voluntary management committee support and development networking.

The Resource Centre maintains linkages with a growing number of support groups and organisations, including the BLOCK Project (Dept. of Justice Youth Project), National Association of Parents Support Group NAPS After Schools Project, Portlaoise Community Action Project, Midlands Health Board Health Promotion Project, the Parish Community and Laois County Council.

Minister Brennan said: "Initiatives like the Knockmay Family Resource Centre are invaluable in helping to tackle the issues of marginalisation and exclusion. The services which this Centre provides addresses the multi-faceted needs of men, women and children who may be going through particularly traumatic situations or are experiencing a whole range of problems which have left them feeling isolated and powerless.

"The services provided 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".

The Minister said his Department recognized the important part played by local community groups around the country in improving the quality of the lives of the people by helping them to develop their capacity to change their situation for the better. It is through a combination of local community initiatives on the ground and support from statutory agencies and other bodies that local communities can realise their potential to play a real part and have a real say in their own development.

**ENDS**