



NEWS RELEASE

21 APRIL 2008

**MINISTER CULLEN LAUNCHES COMMUNITY ADVOCACY PROJECT
FOR THE SOUTH-EAST**

Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr. Martin Cullen, T.D. today (Monday, 21st April 2008) officially launched the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency's (DESSA) Community Advocacy Project for the South-East Region.

The DESSA Community Advocacy Project will provide an advocate to assist, support and represent people with disabilities in claiming their entitlements, to access services and to have their voices heard. The Advocate will have a base at St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre in Waterford.

Speaking today, Minister Martin Cullen TD said: "I welcome the establishment of this advocacy service for the South East Region and I am pleased that my Department has been involved in funding the service. Forty-seven community and voluntary advocacy projects nationwide have been allocated funding since 2004 to deliver representative advocacy services to people with disabilities".

Minister Cullen continued, "Advocacy is the act of speaking on behalf of a person or empowering that person to speak for him or herself. I understand that since the Advocate took up her position, she has been busy representing a number of people in this way in the South-East Region. This is surely a testament to the need for such a service in the area".

The Minister also paid tribute to the many organisations and individuals involved in establishing and supporting the Community Advocacy Project, including DESSA,



Department of Social and Family Affairs

the Family Support Agency, the Family Resource Centres in the South-East, particularly St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre, and the Citizens Information Board. The Minister said, "This launch demonstrates the co-operation and partnership of statutory and voluntary organisations in delivering an advocacy service to people with disabilities in the South-East. Organisations are working in partnership to maximise resources and build on the expertise available to ensure that people with disabilities are supported to give voice to their needs."

ENDS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board, which is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy to the public on the broad range of social and civil services.

Family Support Agency

The Family Support Agency (FSA) was formally established in 2003, under the Family Support Agency Act 2001. The FSA has responsibility for a number of family programmes and services including the Family & Community Resource Centre Programme.

Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency

The Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA) is a national organisation funded by the Family Support Agency, the Department of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform to develop and deliver social inclusion initiatives to people with disabilities and their families. DESSA was established in 2001 to support community organisations in ensuring the active involvement and participation of people with disabilities and their families in local community life.

St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre, Waterford.

St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre was established in 1984 and provides a wide variety of services within Waterford city including counselling, positive parenting programmes, community development and childcare. The centre houses Waterford Citizens Information Centre and the Waterford Befriending Project for people with mental health difficulties.