



MINISTER COUGHLAN PRESENTS €77,240 TO MARRIAGE COUNSELLING GROUPS IN DONEGAL

Mary Coughlan T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today visited four organisations providing marriage and relationship counselling services in Donegal. Cheques totalling €77,240 were presented to the organisations during the visits. The ACCORD services in Donegal Town and Letterkenny received €27,400 and €35,970, respectively. Family Ministry Support and Development Group and Donegal Youth Service, two other Letterkenny based services, received €8,870 and €5,000.

“Families bind our communities together. These bonds are under increasing pressure from many areas – economic, social and demographic. As Minister responsible for Family Affairs I am determined to keep family issues central to Government policy, as illustrated by our ‘Families First Policy’. This policy is evident in such initiatives as the establishment of the Family Support Agency, which administers the funding distributed today, and the nationwide consultative Family Fora being held during the remainder of this year.

“The importance of the Family Support Agency can be gauged by the effectiveness of the funding it provides to organisations such as ACCORD and MRCS. Time and again the counselling they provide has been proven to work, especially when provided by skilled and



experienced organisations operating on a local basis,” said Minister Coughlan.

ACCORD aims to help people in their marriages and relationships, primarily through the provision of marriage preparation courses and marriage counselling. ACCORD Donegal, based in Donegal Town, provided marriage preparation courses for 44 couples and marriage counselling for 25 people in 2002. ACCORD Letterkenny provided marriage preparation courses for 77 couples and marriage counselling for 140 people in 2002.

Family Ministry Support and Development Group (FMSDG) seeks to support all families married, single, adoptive and separated. It does so by providing a range of services including bereavement and marriage counselling and support groups for families after suicide and separation. In 2002 it provided marriage counselling for 18 people, child counselling for 56 children and bereavement counselling for 25 children.

Donegal Youth Service aims to support and empower young people after parental separation. It operates services such as youth club support, social education programmes, youth information and alcohol and drug awareness programmes.



The funding presented today comes under the 2003 Scheme of Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services. So far this year some €6.8m has been allocated to more than 450 voluntary and community groups nationwide providing marriage counselling, marriage preparation, child counselling in relation to parental separation and bereavement counselling support. The scheme is administered by the Family Support Agency.

Minister Coughlan spoke of the upcoming Family Fora: “Earlier this year I announced a series of five nationwide consultative family fora to take the pulse of the nation on how best the state can support families. The first forum was held in Donegal, with great success, on the first of May last. I can now announce the remaining four fora – to be held in the Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel on the 25th of September, Cork Metropole Hotel on October 9th, Galway Best Quality Hotel, Clarenbridge on November 6th and finally at Croke Park on the 4th of December.

“These national consultations will be an opportunity for family members, and those who work them, to express the concerns and themes which influence family life today. The fora discussions will help to inform the development of future policy and will be documented in a detailed report to be prepared at the end of the series,” added Minister Coughlan.



ENDS 21st August, 2003

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SEE FACT SHEET ATTACHED



Notes for News Editor

The Family Support Agency

The Family Support Agency was formally launched by Minister Coughlan on May 15th last. Its main task is to protect the family, by supporting the stability of family life and addressing the effects of changing family formation.

The FSA provides a family mediation service, develops marriage and relationship counselling, undertakes research and advises the Minister on family issues and works in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. The Family Support Agency has been allocated a budget of €17.2m for 2003.

The Family Support Agency:

- Provides a family mediation service to help couples, who have decided to separate, negotiate their separation without acrimony. Over the last six years this service has expanded from two centres in Dublin and Limerick to 12 centres throughout the country. This figure will increase to 14 by the end of this year.
- Supports, promotes and develops the provision of marriage and relationship counselling and other family support services.



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- Supports, promotes and develops the Family and Community Services Resource Centres programme. The number of centres has increased from 10 to over 85 since 1997.
 - Provides and disseminates information about these services and other family issues, and
 - Provides financial assistance to voluntary organizations for these purposes.
 - Undertakes or commissions research into matters related to its functions.

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