



SPEECH

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MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

At the launch of the

ONE FAMILY ANNUAL REPORT for 2006

The Mercer Hotel, Dublin

1.30pm, Wednesday 5 September 2007



Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here today to launch One Family's 2006 Annual Report and I would like to thank One Family's Director, **Karen Kiernan** for her kind invitation.

One Family

I would like to start by congratulating One Family for the many years of supports and services it has provided to one-parent families. Much has changed for one-parent families since the inception of *Cherish* in 1972. The voice for single mothers which sought that all children would be cherished equally has evolved into an important national resource for all members of one-parent families.

Supports and services now include childcare, parenting supports and training (including parent mentoring and wellbeing programmes), information on a wide range of family issues and free confidential counselling open not only to mothers and fathers, but also to teens in one-parent families.

One Family Annual Report

Your Annual Report rightly highlights the impressive progress achieved by One Family during 2006. The 10% increase in your client base is a sure indication that the positive message being issued by One Family is reaching its intended target.

The development of a parent mentoring service and family communication course are hugely encouraging initiatives which will help many families. The FETAC accreditation of your computer training course and indeed the expansion of your website and development of related information material indicate the wide range of quality supports that One Family successfully provide.



Campaigns

I am of course well aware of national campaigns initiated by One Family advocating equality and social inclusion for lone parents and their families. Many have been discussed with Ministers from various Departments and have been taken into account in the determination of many Government policies over the years.

Co-operation with the Department

This spirit of co-operation is, of course, now well-founded and in particular was demonstrated by the involvement of One Family and other lone parent representative groups in the discussions with my Department both prior to and since the launch of the Government discussion paper on lone parents and in the provision of detailed, well-informed submissions and proposals to the process.

Although I believe that it is only through improved employment prospects that the risk of poverty and social exclusion of lone parents can be radically reduced, I also accept as do Government that activation measures without ancillary supports - such as education, training and quality affordable childcare, - are not likely to succeed.

This is why I am happy that a process to test new lone parent proposals in both an urban and rural setting is due to commence this month. I have also asked that my officials seek a meeting to discuss how One Family might co-operate with this process.

Research initiatives

Of course, central to any family policy initiative is the need for quality research to ascertain the issues that impact on families – both positively and negatively.



Many of you will be aware of "*Growing up in Ireland*," the largest research project of its kind ever undertaken in Ireland. This research will look at the lives of 10,000 infants and 8,000 nine-year olds over a period of time, seeking to identify issues for the development of ongoing positive family policies and services to the benefit of all families.

The first round of research into the lives of the 9-year-old cohort has already taken place with work on the infant group currently progressing.

I was delighted to hear that One Family itself has commenced work on a large study into the lives of lone parents in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment. Over 8,000 lone parents are to be invited by One Family to participate in the study which aims to achieve an understanding of the issues lone parents on the One Parent Family Payment and their families face in going out to work.

I note that One Family has stated that the results of this research will be used to support ongoing lobbying and to make recommendations to Government on how best to support lone parents. I welcome this and indeed my Department is supporting this research initiative for that very reason. It is my hope that the results of this study will also help my Department to improve its supports to people parenting alone.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all those involved with One Family for the excellent work you are doing for families right across Ireland.

In particular I would like to thank Chairperson, **Dr Fergus Ryan** and the Board of Directors of One Family; Policy and Campaigns Manager, **Candy Murphy** and



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again, Director **Karen Kiernan** for inviting me here today. I look forward to continuing to work closely with One Family for the betterment of all families in Ireland.

It gives me great pleasure to officially launch the One Family Annual Report for 2006.

Thank you all very much.

ENDS