



Speech by
Séamus Brennan, T.D.,
Minister For Social And Family Affairs
At
The Celebration To Mark
100 Family Resource Centres
Croke Park
6th Feb 2007

Today is a proud day for all involved over the past 22 years in development, expansion and growth of the Family Resource Centres programme.

They say that from little acorns grow mighty oaks.

And over the past two decades we have seen the family focused services provided by the Family Resource Centres take root throughout the country. And not just take root, but grow and branch out into communities the length and breadth of the country to help tackle the social issues that affect families and blunt opportunity and fulfilment.

Today, on behalf of the Government and on my own behalf, I want to salute all of those involved in making Family Resource Centres the success they are today-



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- The Family Resource Centre National Forum.
- The Family Support Agency.
- The volunteers who have given so much of their time and expertise to help others.
- The many agencies and voluntary organizations to have helped in the development and shaping of this valuable family resource service.

Family Resource Centres have a pivotal role to play in empowering people in disadvantaged communities by directly involving them in decisions which affect them on a daily basis.

The facilities, supports and encouragements that you provide allow them to develop their own skills, knowledge and experience to build fulfilling futures for themselves and their families.

The figures which have emerged from the Nexus report show the full extent of the numbers availing of the services and supports of the Family Resource Centres. In 2005 alone-

There were 850,000 visits to use centre facilities

Some 16,000 people completed training courses

Almost 140,000 people received advice and information

Family Resource Centres are now at the very coalface of reaching out and assisting people and families towards more fulfilling lives, free from poverty, neglect, harm, discrimination and abuse.

They are providing stepping stones out of deprivation and social exclusion and helping to build lives shaped by our values of equality, opportunity for all and social justice.



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The fact that last year alone some 850,000 visits were made to centres is a resounding endorsement of how the centres have become beacons of hope for so many.

For those who are struggling to rise above disadvantage, above the stresses of modern living and to escape from lives that are often blunted because of inadequate education, restrictions on personal development and a lack of opportunity.

This year the Government is providing almost €19 million for the Resource Centres programme. But the valuable role of the centres can not be measured in financial terms alone.

In many ways we will never know the full story of the thousands of lives that have been changed for the better, the families whose lives have been transformed, and the many who have had their dignity and pride restored.

The services provided by the centres are so often emotional and practical lifelines for those who may be going through particularly traumatic situations and experiencing a range of problems that can combine to leave them feeling isolated and voiceless.

Now 22 years on from that first investment of €300,000 we have reached the historic milestone of 100 Family Resource Centres.

The Government is proud to have delivered on its commitment under the last National Development Plan. And I can assure you today we have no intention of resting on our achievements in this area.

Communities the length and breadth of the country have been enriched by the valuable work of Family Resource Centres. Now we will build on that success over the coming years.

I am pleased to announce today an investment package of almost €190 million that will be targeted directly at increasing the number of Family Resource Centres countrywide from the current 100 to at least 142 inside the next seven years. In all some €187 million will be invested in creasing the number of Centres by six per year



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over the next seven years. The funding for the additional 42 centres will be drawn from an overall investment of €861 million to further support communities under the second National Development Plan 2007-2013.

Today, as we mark the milestone of 100 Family Resource Centres, it is a time to celebrate what has been achieved by so many dedicated people. But it is also a time to look forward to the expansion of these valuable family focused social services and supports.

Future generations will judge us as a society on

- How well we harnessed our Celtic Tiger economic success to reach out and help those left behind or marginalized by our buoyant economy.
- How we lifted children out of poverty and distress.
- How we lifted Lone Parents out of social stigma and gave them hope for the future.
- How we rewarded older people and gave them dignity and security.
- How we gave the marginalized new opportunity and hope for the future.

How well we achieve those goals will be our legacy. Today, Family Resource Centres can be proud of the legacy they are building.

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