



**Address by the**

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs**

**Martin Cullen TD**

**At the launch of the**

***Parenting Positively Series***

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**Check against delivery**



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Chairman of the Family Support Agency, **Michael O’Kennedy**; Chief Executive Officer of the Agency, **Pat Bennett**; Chief Executive Officer of Barnardos, **Fergus Finlay**; **Anne Conroy** also of Barnardos; **authors of the booklets** we are launching here today; ladies and gentlemen:

### **Welcome**

I am particularly pleased to be here this afternoon to launch this series of free booklets by the **Family Support Agency and Barnardos** which are aimed at supporting parents of children aged six to 12 years through a range of parenting challenges. I would like to begin by congratulating everyone involved in this collaborative endeavor.

The Family Support Agency has an information role, which is key to the Government’s commitment to assist and support families. The publication of these nine booklets with Barnardos, marks a further forward step in improved information provision for families.

### **Parenting Positively**

Being a parent is one of the most important, challenging and yet rewarding roles that anyone can undertake. Children are the future of our country and parents are the primary educators and protectors of our children. Parents have one of the toughest jobs in the world, particularly when faced with issues such as death, separation, domestic abuse and bullying, which may be having a devastating impact on them personally, but also on their children.



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The vast majority of parents do an excellent job in rearing their children with all the necessary love, care and attention that is required.

However, with increasing pressures being put on modern families and with many parents not having ready access to the traditional extended family, the development of quality information on positive parenting is a timely and very welcome initiative.

These booklets cover **general parenting skills** but also take us through issues such as helping children cope with and understand **separation, bullying, domestic abuse** and **death**. All very serious topics for young minds. The booklets are extremely useful because they focus on these difficult issues - during trying times for everyone concerned - and offer guidance to parents on how they can address these situations together with their children.

I very much welcome, as we have seen from **Anne Conroy's** presentation, that there are booklets for parents to read themselves and then there are the more easier-to-read illustrated equivalent for the young child. The series offers parents and children vital guidance, information and support through difficult times.

As a resource they will not just be used by parents but also by those working with families and children such as teachers, social workers, health professionals and counsellors.

### **Family Support Agency**

Parenting positively is very relevant to the work of the Family Support Agency in its provision of a Family Mediation Service for couples separating; the funding it



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awards to organisations providing marriage, child and bereavement counselling services and to the 106 Family Resource Centres operating under the Agency's Family Resource Centre programme.

In 2007, the Agency funded over 140 organisations working in schools and parishes around the country providing children with bereavement support. The booklet about coping with death will be particularly useful in the provision of this service. The Family Support Agency also allocated funding to nearly 170 organisations for child counselling in relation to parental separation. These organisations and the Family Resource Centres in 106 communities will undoubtedly benefit by the publication and distribution of this entire series.

The Agency also directly provides family mediation through its 16 mediation centres around Ireland, and the booklet on separation will be a valuable resource to parents helping them consider what is important for children at this particular time.

### **Barnardos**

Each year Barnardos works directly with just under 5,000 children and families throughout Ireland delivering services from over 30 locations. The Barnardos National Children's Resource Centre provides parents and professionals with information and resources on all aspects of parenting and child development as well as providing parenting courses on request. Barnardos has a *Guardian ad Litem service*, the Family welfare conferences and a bereavement counselling service also for children. All of the booklets will be of enormous help to the families that you support.



## **Parenting Skills**

In reading the booklets, I feel one of the most important in the series is the booklet 'Parenting Skills'. It looks at the different styles of parenting and asks us to reflect on our own style. In a rapidly changing society such as we have in Ireland today, it is important to take time to reflect on what we want as families for our children and the impact we have on them as parents.

This booklet's underlying message – that if we spend time understanding and supporting our child's development, that child will grow up feeling loved and valued. It is sometimes not recognised that at the root of every child's self-confidence is a sense of belonging and a sense of self worth. This booklet reminds us of that and how these components can be fostered in children.

I would recommend in particular this booklet for all parents of young children. In a positive sense, when you do read it, adults will recognise a lot of what they are already doing in a good way, in their role as a parent.

## **Conclusion**

The development of the **Parenting Positively** series is down to the work of the staff of both the Family Support Agency and Barnardos. My thanks to the Chairman of the Family Support Agency, **Michael O Kennedy** and to **Fergus Finlay**, Chief Executive of Barnardos and to the Family Support Agency CEO, **Pat Bennett**. The partnership approach of the Family Support Agency and Barnardos in this exercise reveals what can be achieved when we work together. I warmly welcome this innovative development and I congratulate both the **Agency** and the **National Children's Resource Centre in Barnardos** for putting these valuable booklets together.



Thank you all very much.

**ENDS**