

**NEWS RELEASE**

**JUNE 21<sup>ST</sup> 2006**

**MINISTER STRESSES PIVOTAL ROLE OF LOCAL GROUPS WHEN  
LAUNCHING PLAN FOR  
“SUPPORTING FAMILIES & BUILDING COMMUNITIES”**

***BRENNAN ANNOUNCES COMMITMENT TO 100 FAMILY RESOURCE  
CENTRES WILL BE DELIVERED BY END 2006***

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., said today that local community-based services and organisations throughout the country have an increasingly pivotal role to play in helping to address the needs of men, women and children in their locality who are experiencing particularly stressful times in their lives, including the risk of income poverty.

Minister Brennan made his comments when launching the Family Resource Centre National Forum strategy “Supporting Families - Building Communities 2006-2009”. The Forum strategy is the result of extensive consultations with more than 90 community-based Family Resource Centres throughout the country.

Minister Brennan said: “The Government recognises the critically important contribution that Resource Centres make to combating disadvantage and reaching out to the vulnerable and marginalised. The services provided by community resource groups are often emotional and practical lifelines for those who may be going through particularly traumatic situations and experiencing a range of problems that combine to often leave them feeling isolated and powerless. This new strategy examines the rapidly changing environment for families in Ireland today and how best to respond to wide-ranging and diverse needs.

Issues such as childcare, balancing work and family life, caring for family members, lone parenting and low income supports have all contributed to the increasing pressures and challenges of modern family life”.

Minister Brennan also announced that the target set by the Government under the National Development Plan of funding 100 Family Resource Centres by the end of 2006 will be delivered. There are currently 91 centres in receipt of core-funding by the Family Support Agency under the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Funding for the Programme has increased substantially from €317,500 in 1994 to over €12.9 million in 2006.

The Minister said the strategic plan will help guide the development of the Forum and in doing so will assist Family Resource Centres in ensuring family support programmes are an integral part of local community activity.

He said the views of those people active on the ground at community level are clearly reflected in the Forum’s key goals and strategies, including: the influencing of national policy on family support; the promotion of inclusive family support practice and provision within a community development context; informing the development of the Family Resource Centre Programme; delivering quality training and development programmes and supports to staff and volunteers and promoting the organisational, resource and communications capacity of the Forum.

“The overriding goal of the strategy is to support Family Resource Centres in ensuring families enjoy fulfilling lives, free from poverty, neglect, discrimination and abuse. It is through a combination of local community initiatives on the ground and support from statutory agencies and other bodies that local communities can fully realise their potential and play a pivotal role in helping and empowering those in difficulties.

I want to salute the critically important contribution made by Resource Centres to combating disadvantage and reaching out to the vulnerable and marginalized”.

Minister Brennan welcomed the particular attention in the Forum’s strategy to the importance of volunteers to the success of Family Resource Centres. “The Forum recognizes the contribution and commitment of volunteers in managing Centres and in working for the benefit of their communities. The strategy can help to enhance volunteer participation through the delivery of key strategic supports. This commitment to supporting volunteerism is very much in line with the Government’s position which recently saw the Taoiseach set up a Task Force on Active Citizenship. Its role, among other things, is to recommend measures which could be taken as part of public policy to facilitate and encourage a greater degree of engagement by citizens in all aspects of life and the growth and development of voluntary organizations as part of a strong civic culture”.

**ENDS**

For further information:

Tom Rowley, 087-8124723

Carmel Fields, 087-2547232