

# **Family Support Agency**

## **Annual Report 2009**

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## **1. Chairperson's Statement**

As Chairperson of the Family Support Agency it is my privilege to present to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, the 2009 Annual Report of the Agency's activities and achievements.

2009 continued to be a very challenging year for families in Ireland including those families accessing services supported by the Family Support Agency. Against the backdrop of unprecedented economic uncertainty and the attendant social pressures, the Family Support Agency continued to underpin vital and increasingly important supports for families.

The 2007-2009 Strategic Plan served to channel the Agency's activities in its efforts to meet these challenges. The Family Resources Centre Programme continued to meet the needs of the communities it serves through its 107 centres. With the support of dedicated volunteers, the Family Resource Centres throughout the country helped to foster a supportive environment for families, by tailoring services to meet their direct needs. Grant aid from the Family Support Agency to 597 voluntary organisations facilitated families gaining access to Marriage, Child and Bereavement counselling. The services of the Agency's 16 Family Mediation offices nationwide helped over 1,500 couples who had already decided to separate, to organise the detail of that separation without recourse to legal conflict.

The transparency of all of these services was enhanced in 2009 through the introduction of the Agency's new website [www.fsa.ie](http://www.fsa.ie). This initiative, together with developments sponsored by the Family Support Agency to provide online information on parenting courses, to develop age-specific parenting programmes for children and their parents, as well as FSA funded research, are all designed to ensure that families are equipped with the information on the services and issues which can positively impact their lives.

The achievements were only possible through the resolute dedication of the staff of the Agency under the expert leadership of its Chief Executive, Pat Bennett. I pay tribute their continuing hard work and commitment, without which none of this would have been possible. My sincere thanks also to my fellow Board members for the benefit of their experience and support in helping to guide the Family Support Agency.

The Family Support Agency has adopted the updated (2009) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and has taken the necessary steps to ensure that it is fully compliant with the Code of Practice by the end of 2010. Procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel, procurement and asset disposal are being carried out and Government travel and pay policy are being complied with in all respects.

Finally my heartfelt appreciation to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin, T.D., and the officials of the Department for providing the support and resources which has facilitated the Agency to achieve its objectives.

**Michael O'Kennedy, S.C.,  
Chairperson,**

## 2. Chief Executive's Report

Looking back over 2009, I am pleased to report the significant achievements of the Agency during the year. The work that we do is guided by our Strategic Plan 2007 – 2009. In 2009 we saw real progress in the implementation of that strategy and fulfillment of our role as a key provider of services to families, both directly through the Agency's Family Mediation Service and indirectly through the many communities that provide services at local level.

The Agency's Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme continued to play its role in this. In 2009 the 107 Family Resource Centres, operating in communities across the country, continued to help combat disadvantage and improve the function of the family unit, with services and activities designed to meet local community needs. Funding of €17.44 million was allocated to the FRC Programme in 2009.

A key function of the Family Support Agency is to support voluntary organisations providing marriage/relationship, child and bereavement counselling services in local communities across the country. In the past year we have been able to provide total funding of €1.37m to 597 of these organisations. Our commitment to its value was strengthened by research conducted in 2006 which revealed that the Agency's funding led to over 70,000 people availing of counselling services in a cost effective manner.

In 2009 the Family Mediation Service (FMS) continued to provide this essential service to couples when going through a separation or divorce. Waiting lists for the service continues to rise and the Board is actively involved at looking at ways to improve the services to our clients.

In terms of research, 2009 saw the completion of a number of studies including research relating to supporting child contact, the review of the Contribution of the Family Mediation Service and the study on the Role of Grandparents in Divorced and Separated Families, which was launched in November 2008. Work continued on a number of other projects including those relating to Family Dynamics and Types based on Census data, examining the changing attitudes and behaviours that may have implications for family formation in Ireland and the development of a Family Research Strategy.

Despite the moratorium on recruitment and the decrease in funding has had a significant impact on our Information remit, progress was achieved. The Agency's ongoing relationship with Barnardos provided further invaluable resources for families. A new online database of parenting courses is now available. In October 2008 the Minister for Social and Family Affairs launched new web based resources designed to help teenagers – [www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp](http://www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp). The teen programme also includes booklets for parents of teenagers.

Underpinning all of the work carried out by the Agency is the Corporate Services section, which includes all Human Resources, Accounts, Payroll and Facilities Management.

The many achievements and progress outlined in this report would not have been possible without the support and commitment of many people. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D., and the officials in her Department. I would also like to thank the Chairperson of the Agency, Mr Michael O'Kennedy S.C., and the Board of the Agency who continue to provide excellent support to me and all the Agency staff.

In particular, I want to acknowledge all the members of staff for their continued commitment and dedication towards the delivery of the Agency's services.

Finally, to the service providers with whom we work, I thank you sincerely for your support and dedication to your communities. In 2010 with the development of a new Strategic Plan we hope to consolidate the developments of the past 6 years and continue to develop support services for families.

**Pat Bennett**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

### 3. Board

The Board of the Family Support Agency is appointed by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. The members appointed have expertise and experience in the fields of family and community services, counselling, family mediation, research and family law.

<b>Chairperson</b>	Mr. Michael O'Kennedy	Senior Counsel
<b>Members</b>	Ms. Clare Cashman (1)	Project Co-Ordinator, Millennium Resource Centre, Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary.
	Senator Maria Corrigan (1)	Psychologist and Member of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
	Ms. Marie Fenlon (2)	Co-Ordinator, Le Chéile Family Resource Centre
	Mr. Geoffrey Corry	Staff Representative
	Ms. Helen Faughnan	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Ms. Angela Gaule (1)	Consultant Mediator and Member of the Mediators Institute of Ireland
	Mr. Dick Hickey	Director St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre, Waterford.
	Ms. Caroline Murphy	Organisational Psychologist and Broadcaster.
	Dr. Colm O'Connor (1)	Clinical Psychologist and Director of Cork Marriage Counselling Centre.
	Ms. Bríd Rocks	Principal, Scoil Uí Mhuiri, Dunleer, Co. Louth Dip. Counselling and Psychotherapy
	Ms. Muriel Walls	Solicitor and family law specialist.

(1) Completed term of office, 5 May 2009

(2) Appointed, 20 July 2009

See Appendix 1 for details of Board meetings in 2009 and for details of Board Sub-Groups.

## **4. Role and Strategic Priorities**

### **4.1 Role**

The Family Support Agency, established on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2003, has a statutory role in relation to support services for families and family policy. The Agency's functions, as prescribed in the Family Support Agency Act, 2001, are set out in Appendix 2.

### **4.2 Strategic Priorities**

The Family Support Agency's second Strategic Plan, which was developed in consultation with its stakeholders, sets out five Strategic Priorities for the Agency over the three years from 2007 to 2009.

**Strategic Priority 1: Support and strengthen families through the delivery of high quality support services in the form of a network of Family Resource Centres, a range of grant supported counselling services, and a family mediation service.**

**Strategic Priority 2: Foster a supportive community environment for families in partnership with the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.**

**Strategic Priority 3: Contribute to the effectiveness of family policy and services by undertaking or commissioning research into matters related to the Agency's functions or such other matters as the Minister may request.**

**Strategic Priority 4: Promote the Family Support Agency as a key provider of support services and related information for families in Ireland.**

**Strategic Priority 5: Develop an effective, adaptable and capable organisation with a culture of pride, innovation and performance, which fosters participation, personal and career development at all levels.**

Section 5 sets out progress across the 5 Strategic Priorities in 2009.

## **5. Work of the Agency in 2009**

### **5.1 Progress in 2009**

In 2009, the Family Support Agency continued to build and enhance relationships with its stakeholders to ensure the delivery of high quality services for families. The Agency also continued to develop its organisation structure in line with the priorities set out in the Agency's 2007 – 2009 Strategic Plan.

The Agency's achievements in 2008 include:

- Provision of a direct family mediation service to approximately 1400 couples nationwide
- Practitioner Training Programme in Family Mediation completed by 7 trainees.
- Funding to some 597 voluntary and community organisations providing counselling services, of which 29 receive multi-annual funding.
- Funding and support to 107 Family Resource Centres (FRC's)
- Funding to 7 Regional Support Agencies to provide technical support and training to FRC's
- Funding to 5 Specialist Support Agencies to provide specialist support and training to FRC's
- Completion of 3 research projects to the standards of quality required by the Agency, of which 1 was launched in November 2009 – The Role of Grandparents in Divorced and Separating Families.
- Development of a National Database of Parenting Programmes. (in collaboration with Barnardos).
- Expansion of Parenting Positively programme to teenagers through the provision of website resource for teenagers and booklets for the parents of teenagers. (in collaboration with Barnardos).

These achievements required ongoing commitment from the board and staff of the Agency and regular consultation with the Agency's stakeholders.

The Family Support Agency wishes to acknowledge the continued support of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The Family Support Agency's organisational structure and staffing in 2009 are detailed in Appendix 3. The Agency's 16 premises throughout the country are listed in Appendix 4.

### **5.2 Finance and Accounts**

The Family Support Agency's total expenditure in 2009 was €34.21m. Of this figure, some €28.81m issued directly to voluntary and community organisations nationwide. This level of expenditure allowed for the continuation and consolidation of the family support services for which the Agency has responsibility.

The Agency's Accounts and Financial Statement for 2009, audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, are at Appendix 5.

### 5.3 The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

The Family Support Agency has a responsibility to support, promote and develop the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme.

#### Policy Priorities

The main aim of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme is to help combat disadvantage by improving the function of the family unit. It emphasises the involvement of local communities in developing approaches to tackle problems and in creating successful partnerships between the voluntary and statutory agencies in their areas. Family Resource Centres operate from community development practices and principles and involve people from marginalised and vulnerable groups and areas of disadvantage at all levels in the project.

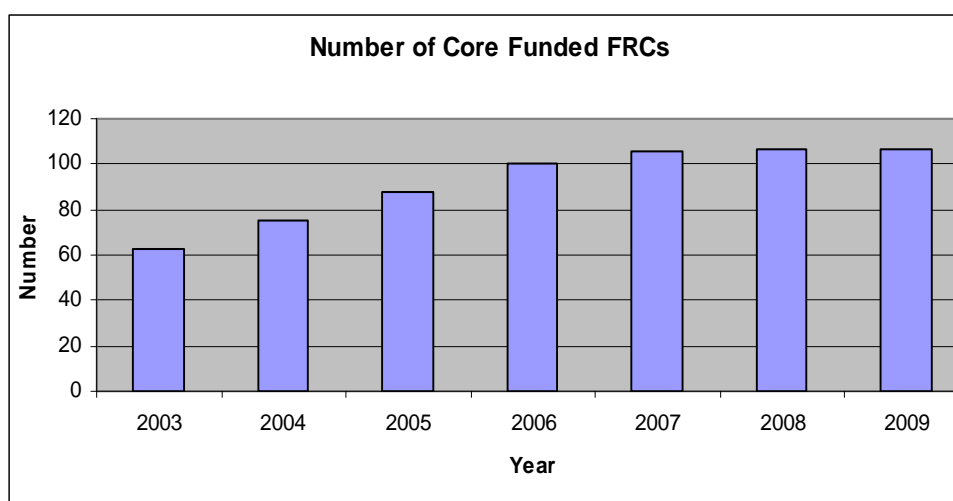
#### Services and Activities

The services provided and activities supported by the resource centres are designed to meet local community needs. They provide Family Support through upholding a community development ethos and the principle of inclusiveness, both central to the values of the Family Support Agency :-

- Information, advice and support to target groups and families in the area.
- Practical assistance to community groups such as training, information and advice.
- Education courses and training opportunities
- Child-care facilities for those attending courses provided by the project.
- Initiatives to enhance the role of young fathers in the lives of their children.
- Involvement of men in the life of the community.
- Lone Parents Groups
- Women's groups
- The use of local centres to act as a meeting point for various groups and services e.g. C.I.C., MABS, AA, residents meetings etc.
- After-school clubs.

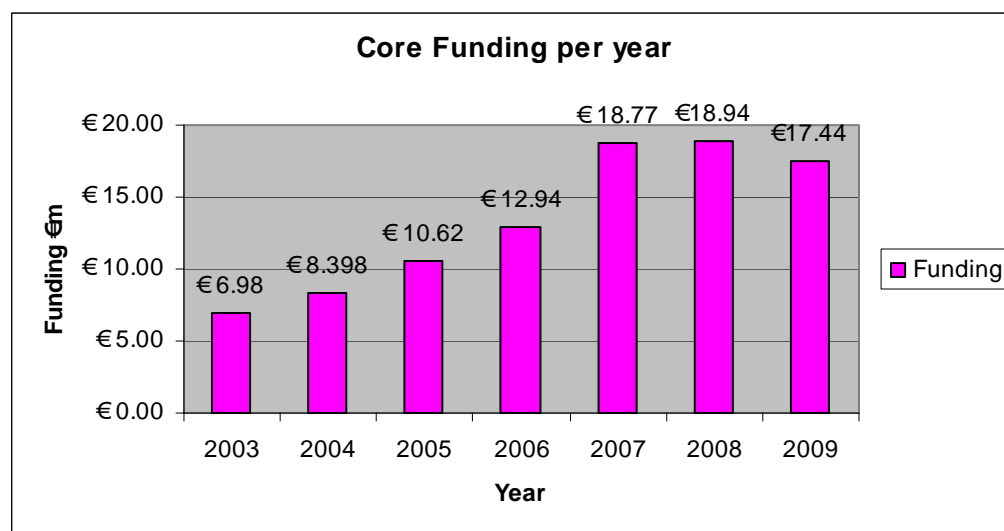
#### Core Funded Centres

Since the Agency gained responsibility for the Programme in 2003, the number of core funded centres has increased from 63 to 107 in 2009.



## Funding

The table below details funding for the Programme each year from 2003 to 2009 :-



## Networking

The Agency encourages networking among Family Resource Centres at a regional and national level. To encourage and strengthen such networking, €70,108 was allocated to the Family Resource Centre (FRC) National Forum in 2009. The Agency also held quarterly meetings with the Family Resource Centre National Forum.

## Evaluation

The Family Support Agency has a software-based self-evaluation system entitled SPEAK FRC (Strategic Planning and Self-evaluation System) available to each Family Resource Centre (FRC). A unique feature of SPEAK FRC is that it can operate across multiple FRCs so that the data collected from each Project is collated into an over-arching database. The Family Support Agency has made this database available to the Regional Forum of FRCs, the Support Agency Network and to individual FRCs. This database is also used to inform the compilation of a programme level report outlining the outputs and impacts of FRCs' work that is published on an annual basis. At programme level, the Family Support Agency now has six years' of SPEAK FRC returns comprising approximately 450 individual datasets.

The primary benefit of SPEAK FRC is felt at FRC level. It is here that staff and volunteers are encouraged to take time to consider the contribution that their FRC is making to their local community and to share information about what is helping and what is hindering the work within each FRC. This sharing of information makes a significant contribution at programme level and benefits all Family Resource Centres. It also provides the Family Support Agency with an overview of the Programme and detail of the work and its impacts on the ground.

A report based on information provided for 2009 by Family Resource Centres using SPEAK is being compiled at present, it will be made available on the FSA website ([www.fsa.ie](http://www.fsa.ie)). SPEAK has created a database of enormous potential to understand the full

programme and its impacts, and most importantly to influence the direction of the programme and related areas of policy and practice.

Training and refresher training on the SPEAK evaluation model is continuing for new and established groups in the Programme.

### **Support for Family Resource Centres**

A number of Regional Support and Specialist Support Agencies were contracted by the Family Support Agency to provide support and advice to projects and to promote good practice.

#### **Regional Support Agencies**

In 2009 there were seven Regional Support Agencies working under contract to provide technical support, training and monitoring to FRC's throughout the country. The work of the Regional Support Agencies included, helping to promote best practice and set standards for the work of FRC's including Board procedures, employment practice and company and accounting practices; working with FRC's in drawing up their three year work plans; monitoring the performance of FRC's and providing the FSA with feedback on the progress of centres. The Regional Support Agencies also supported a number of new projects by providing training and support for the establishment of new Management Committees and in Community consultation and community needs analysis. Also, training was delivered in a range of areas including community development, company law and employment legislation

#### **Specialist Support Agencies**

Five specialist agencies supported the FRC's in their work in 2009. The FSA commissioned them to provide services for the FRC's across a range of areas including disability awareness and staff/volunteer training in personal advocacy for people with disabilities (DESSA), staff/volunteer training and awareness in terms of encouraging Traveller participation (Pavee Point), supporting families dealing with domestic violence (Women's Aid), supporting family members dealing with drug use (Family Support Network), supporting and enabling FRC's to embed arts based community development in their work ( Blue Drum).

### **5.4 Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services**

The Family Support Agency administers the Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations providing Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services. The Agency has a responsibility to support, promote and develop the provision of marriage and relationship counselling marriage preparation and family support services.

During 2009 a total amount of €1.37m was allocated for the Scheme of Grants.

#### **Allocation of funding**

A total of 614 applications were received from organisations seeking grant funding of which 597 were approved for payment (599 were approved for payment in 2008). 74 of

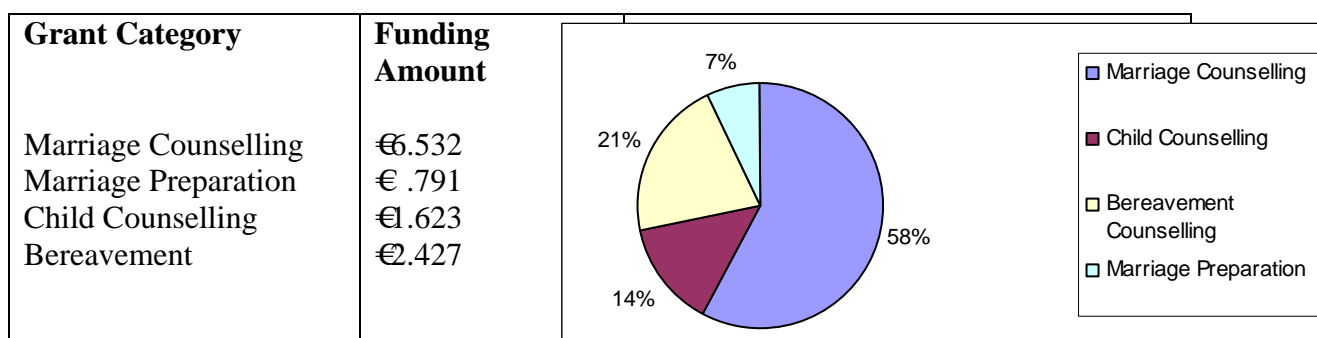
these organisations were applying for grant funding for the first time. The overall amount of funding sought by organisations in 2009 was over €21.5m

### Priorities governing funding allocations

- The continued financial support of established major providers of services so that they can continue to provide and develop their services
- Supporting the establishment of a regional network of family support services by investing in locally based service providers in key areas throughout the country.
- An emphasis on supporting service providers in disadvantaged communities.

### Breakdown of funding

The breakdown of the overall allocation of the funding to the different services is as follows :-



### Multi-annual funding

In line with the recommendations of the Petrus Report, commissioned by the Family Support Agency, 29 organisations were selected for multi-annual funding. The organisations selected were in receipt of funding in excess of €60,000 in 2008, were well established and had a good track record.

Multi-annual funding will allow organisations to :

- plan within a given timeframe.
- deliver a quality service
- Add stability to the sector
- Give stability to their staff

In 2009 the 29 major organisations were approved for funding amounting to €7,863,760

### Evaluation of Services

Some 33 organisations throughout the country were visited in 2009 to evaluate the standard and type of service being provided. Overall the standard of services provided by these organisations was found to be satisfactory.

These visits also facilitate the development of a network of contacts to feed-back views to the Family Support Agency on the future development of services.

## **5.5 Family Mediation Service**

The Family Support Agency also has responsibility for the Family Mediation Service, a free, professional and confidential service for couples, married and non-married, who have decided to separate or divorce and who together want to negotiate the terms of their separation or divorce with the help of a trained mediator. The Family Mediation Service is also available for individuals who have never lived together but may have a child to parent and wish to come to mediation to negotiate parenting and contact arrangements; it is also available for same-sex couples who are separating. Mediation can also assist in other family issues such as grandparent access to grandchildren post separation, and issues around children in care between natural parents and foster parents.

Family mediation assists separating couples to look at the resources and options open to them and to reach an agreement that meets the needs and interests of both and the needs and interests of their children.

### **The Process of Mediation**

When the clients arrive at a Family Mediation centre they are seen together by their mediator. The mediator explains that in this process:

- the clients are the decision makers
- the mediator's role is to facilitate their discussions and to manage their negotiations
- the mediator is neither a counsellor nor a legal adviser

At this initial session the mediator hears why the clients have opted for mediation, what their expectations are from mediation and what issues they need to discuss in order to reach agreement. The clients then create their own agenda of issues for negotiation.

### **Issues for family mediation frequently include:**

- The family home - where will each person live and where will the children live?
- Other jointly owned property – how will this be divided?
- Parenting – how will the children spend time with each of their parents and how will the parents communicate about their children?
- Financial support – will support be paid for one or other party and the children and how much will each person have to live on?
- Pensions – what entitlements are there and how will they be distributed?
- Assets – how will the assets be divided?
- Debts – how will they manage debts and other outgoings?
- Contents of the family home – how will the contents be allocated?

Having set the agenda the parties provide information on their future financial requirements. They substantiate their income and earnings - where property is involved it may be necessary to obtain a valuation. Financial advice may need to be sought if there are complicated financial issues or company valuations, as well as the value and benefits of any pension scheme. If the parties have not already sought legal advice, they may need to do so in the course of mediation.

When the parties have reached agreement on the above issues, the mediator draws up a Note of Mediated Agreement. The clients can then take the Note of Mediated Agreement to their respective solicitors to be drawn up into a legal Deed of Separation. Family mediation

can take anything from two to six sessions to complete depending on the level of communication between the parties and the complexity of the issues involved. At the end of the process couples with children are invited to bring them along to explain the future arrangements agreed so that children are reassured that both parents continue to have their best interests at heart.

The Family Support Agency's Family Mediation Service has a total of sixteen centres nationally. The Family Support Agency has full-time Family Mediation Service centres in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Limerick and part-time Family Mediation Service centres in Athlone, Blanchardstown, Castlebar, Dundalk, Letterkenny, Portlaoise, Raheny, Sligo, Tallaght, Tralee, Waterford and Wexford. The Family Mediation Service relocated its Limerick office to 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, River Point, Lr Mallow Street in March 2009.

The Family Mediation Service has been in operation for 23 years from 1986 to 2009 and works with the all-issues model of mediation as outlined above. In recent years the service has been dealing with an increasing number of referrals from the courts. The majority of these referrals are dealing with parenting issues between unmarried parents.

### **Statistical data**

From 1986 -1996, an average of 250 couples a year used the Family Mediation Service. The number using the Service has increased dramatically over the years. In the period January to December 2009, the Service worked with almost 1,400 couples. Of these 508 completed the process and reached agreement; a further 336 did not proceed after the intake session, 52 returned to their marriages and the remaining couples were carried forward to 2010. Full statistics for 2009 are given below:

#### **Nationwide**

<b>Couples helped in 2009</b>	<b>Couples who finished mediation process</b>	<b>No. of couples who did not proceed after intake</b>
1396	817	336

<b>2009</b>	<b>No. of couples participating in mediation</b>	<b>Reached agreement</b>	<b>Return to Marriage</b>	<b>Did not complete mediation</b>
Total	817	508	52	257
Total in %	100%	62%	6%	32%

#### **Eastern Region - Dublin, Dundalk, Raheny, Blanchardstown and Ballymun**

<b>2009</b>	<b>No. of couples participating in mediation</b>	<b>Reached agreement</b>	<b>Return to Marriage</b>	<b>Did not complete mediation</b>
Total	328	197	14	117
Total in %	100%	60%	4%	36%

### Western Region - Galway, Castlebar, Sligo and Letterkenny

<b>2009</b>	<b>No. of couples participating in mediation</b>	<b>Reached agreement</b>	<b>Return to Marriage</b>	<b>Did not complete mediation</b>
Total	182	96	9	77
Total in %	100%	53%	5%	42%

### Mid Western Region - Limerick, Athlone, Portlaoise and Tallaght

<b>2009</b>	<b>No. of couples participating in mediation</b>	<b>Reached agreement</b>	<b>Return to Marriage</b>	<b>Did not complete mediation</b>
Total	150	113	9	28
Total in %	100%	75%	6%	19%

### Southern Region - Cork , Waterford, Wexford and Tralee

<b>2009</b>	<b>No. of couples participating in mediation</b>	<b>Reached agreement</b>	<b>Return to Marriage</b>	<b>Did not complete mediation</b>
Total	157	102	20	35
Total in %	100%	65%	13%	22%

## 5.6 Research

The Agency's research programme continued to develop in 2009. Many of the projects initiated in earlier years have been finalised or are reaching the latter stages of development. The research activities were carried out through grant aiding of research to organisations with a research capacity, direct commissioning of research and funding for a research sponsorship programme.

### Grant Aided Research

Under the Call for Research Programme, organisations with a research capacity are invited to apply for funding to undertake original research on issues which are relevant to the Agency's remit. The Agency invited applications for research grants in each of 2006, 2007 and 2008. A total of 4 projects have been funded in this manner. Three of these projects were fully completed in 2009, of which one was published during the year. Two other final reports will be made available in 2010.

Supporting Child Contact: The Need for Child Contact Centres in Ireland (One Family)  
Funding for this project was approved in 2007. It involves a preliminary exploration of contact, defined as supporting "parents and children who do not live together to maintain contact in a range of situations". The study was completed and the final draft report for the study was approved by the Board during 2009.

While publication of the final report is scheduled for early 2010, the Board of the Family Support Agency has agreed to contribute funding for 2 pilot contact centres, in line with recommendations of the report.

The Role of Grandparents in Divorced and Separated Families (*Virpi Timonen, Martha Doyle and Ciara O'Dwyer, Trinity College Dublin*)

This study was approved for funding in 2008 and seeks to explore how inter-generational relationships are affected by divorce or separation in the 'middle' generation, by means of a qualitative study of the experience of 31 grandparents whose children had undergone divorce/separation.

The report was launched by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs in November 2009 and is available to download from the Agency's website [www.fsa.ie](http://www.fsa.ie).

The FRC Forum, the umbrella organisation for the Family Resource Centres funded by the Agency, is to explore whether mechanisms could be established with FRCs to address some of the needs of grandparents' identified in the study.

Family Dynamics and Family Types in Ireland, 1986-2006 (*Pete Lunn, ESRI and Tony Fahey, University College Dublin and Carmel Hanna*)

Following the approval of funding in 2007, the promoters of this study were granted controlled and collaborative access to the 2006 Census Research Microdata File on pilot basis. This was the first time such access was granted for original research in Ireland and facilitated comprehensive quantitative analysis of Census data to explore the determinants of different family structures from among a range of background characteristics.

Having been approved by the Board at the end of 2009, the report will be published early in 2010.

Changing Gender Role Attitudes and Behaviour: Implications for Family Formation in Ireland (*Margret Fine-Davis, Trinity College, Dublin*)

Approval for funding of this 2 phase project was given in 2008. The purpose of the study is to explore people's attitudes to family formation in the context of changes in gender role attitudes and behaviour and the profound demographic changes that are taking place in Ireland.

The first phase of the project, involving a qualitative survey of 48 men and women, is designed to develop a conceptual model to inform the development of a larger, more representative quantitative (phase 2) study of current attitudes to family formation in Ireland. The report on the completed qualitative phase of the project has been approved by the Board and will be available on the Agency's website early in 2010.

The quantitative (second) phase of the project, involving a survey of 1,000 people nationally will be undertaken in 2010.

## **Commissioned Research**

Assessment of the contribution of the Family Mediation Service

Work commissioned by the Agency to assess the contribution of the Agency's Family Mediation Service which commenced in 2008, continued into 2009. The final draft report

provided to the Agency during the year is being considered by the Board of the Agency with a view to implementing appropriate measures proposed.

#### Development of a Family Research Strategy

The start of 2009 saw the commencement of work on the project commissioned by the Agency to develop a strategy for family research in Ireland to guide family research activities, including those undertaken by the Agency. The terms of reference specifically required the successful tenderer to provide a comprehensive overview of family research in Ireland and, based on analysis of current and projected need for family research and taking account of practice of family research in other jurisdictions, to develop a strategy for that research. Part of the project is the development of a data base of family research since 1998.

The final draft report, together with the required data base, was submitted to the Board of the Agency at the end of 2009. Once the Board has approved the draft report, it is anticipated that the report and the data base of family research will be available early in 2010.

#### **Research Sponsorship Programme**

In 2008 the Family Support Agency initiated its Research Sponsorship Programme to develop research capacity in the academic community in relevant field(s) of research.

In 2008, 2 year funding was awarded to a PhD involved in a project examining 'Immigration, Identity & Children's Community Relations'. Good progress was made on the project in 2009.

#### **Quality Assurance**

Underpinning all research activities is the need to ensure standards of quality through both the processes used to undertake research and of the research output produced. Activities aimed at achieving this throughout 2009 included accessing technical research assistance when required and peer review of all research in order to secure approval from the Board of the Agency.

#### **5.7 Information**

In 2009 the Family Support Agency continued its role in promoting and disseminating information about issues in relation to marriage and relationship education, family mediation, parenting and family responsibilities and related matters.

#### **Collaborative Projects**

**The Agency has developed a number of collaborative relationships with other organisations, both statutory and non-statutory, which have enabled the Agency to advance issues relevant to it's Information brief. In 2009, the Agency provided funding and assistance to Barnardos in 2 specific projects.**

## National Database of Parenting Programmes

The Agency funded Barnardos to develop its National Database of Parenting Programmes, which provides details of parenting courses throughout the country. The data base was launched in May 2009 by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Ms Mary Hanafin, T.D. The National Database of Parenting Programmes can be found at [www.barnardos.ie/parentingcourses](http://www.barnardos.ie/parentingcourses)

## Parenting Positively

“Parenting Positively” is a parenting information programme developed through the collaboration of the Family Support Agency and Barnardos over a number of years. The first phase of the programme was a series of 9 booklets which provided information and guidance to parents of children between the **ages of 6 and 12**, which was launched in November 2007.

In 2009 work was completed on Phase two of the Programme, which aims to support the parents of **teenagers** by means of booklets for parents and electronically available material focused towards teenagers, which were developed by practitioners with experience in the relevant areas. The 4 booklets for parents of teenagers are designed to provide support to such parents in coping with the consequences and challenges that may arise and to cultivate positive relationships with their teenage child. The issues dealt with in the booklets are:

- Teenage Well-being for Parents of Teenagers
- Helping Teenagers to cope with Separation
- Helping Teenagers to cope with Death
- Helping Teenagers to cope with Domestic Abuse

“Teenhelp” is a dedicated link, <http://www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp>, hosted on the Barnardos’ website, to provide information and support to teenagers on a range of issues which they may encounter throughout the various stages of their teenage years. The web based information covers:

- Teenage Well-Being
- Parental Separation
- Death
- Domestic Abuse

## **Appendix 1 - Board Meetings in 2009 and Board Sub-Groups**

### **1. Board Meetings**

26 January	23 February	6 April
27 April	20 August	28 September
30 October	30 November	21 December

### **2. Board Sub-Groups**

<b>Sub-Group</b>	<b>Members</b>
Audit Committee	Dick Hickey (Chair), Muriel Walls, Helen Faughnan,
Counselling	Colm O'Connor (Chair.), Bríd Rocks, Dick Hickey
Family Mediation Service	Muriel Walls (Chair.), Geoffrey Corry, Marie Fenlon, Dick Hickey, Colm O'Connor, Helen Faughnan
Family Resource Centres	Bríd Rocks (Chair), Marie Fenlon, Helen Faughnan, Dick Hickey,
Information & Strategic Planning	Dick Hickey (Chair.), Geoffrey Corry, Bríd Rocks
Oireachtas Committee	Michael O'Kennedy (Chair.), Muriel Walls, Pat Bennett, Bill O'Dea, Polly Phillimore
Research	Helen Faughnan (Chair), Caroline Murphy, Geoffrey Corry, Colm O'Connor

## Appendix 2 - Statutory Functions

The functions of the Family Support Agency, as prescribed in the Family Support Agency Act 2001, Section 4, are set out below:

4. (1) The functions of the Agency shall be –

(a) to provide a family mediation service,

(b) to provide, where the Agency considers it necessary or expedient -

(i) family mediation through such other persons as it considers appropriate,

(ii) training in family mediation, either by itself or such other persons as it considers appropriate,

(c) to support, promote and develop the provision of marriage and relationship counselling and family support services,

(d) to promote and disseminate information about issues in relation to marriage and relationships education, family mediation, parenting and family responsibilities and related matters and in this regard to co-operate with other public authorities in providing information to assist persons in balancing their work and family responsibilities,

(e) to support, promote and develop the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme of the Minister,

(f) to undertake or commission research into matters related to its functions or such other matters as the Minister may request,

(g) to provide at the request of the Minister or on its own initiative advice, information and assistance to the Minister in relation to the development of any aspect of its functions,

(h) to provide, subject to the consent of the Minister, and in accordance with criteria established under section 7, financial assistance to voluntary bodies in respect of any matter related to the Agency's functions and for this purpose to administer—

(i) the scheme of the Minister known as the Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations providing Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services.

(ii) the programme of the Minister known as the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, and

(iii) such other schemes, grants and other facilities for financial assistance as may, from time to time, be authorised by the Minister after consultation with the Minister for Finance,

(i) to prepare strategic plans in accordance with section 9,

(j) to perform any additional functions assigned to the Agency under *Section 5*

**4. (2)** The Agency in performing the functions conferred on it by or under this Act shall have regard to –

(a) the need to assist in particular, persons involved in the process of separation or divorce to reach agreement where possible, especially in disputes involving children.

(b) the need for co-operation with other relevant public authorities and voluntary bodies

(c) Government policy in particular social inclusion policy.

**4. (3)** The Agency shall have all such powers as are necessary for or incidental to the performance of its functions under this Act.

## Appendix 3 - Organisational Structure and Staffing

<b>Pat Bennett</b>		<b>Chief Executive</b>	
<b>1. Corporate Services</b>		<b>2. Research</b>	
Bill O’Dea	AP	Aideen Mooney*	AP
Deirdre Fradl	HEO	Deirdre Roche	EO
Anne O’Riordan	HEO	(Research & Information)	
Niamh Egan	EO		
Michael Hanrahan	CO		
<b>3. Information</b>			
		Vacancy	AP
<b>4. Family Resource Centres and Counselling Grants</b>			
Christina O’Connor	AP		
<b>Family Resource Centres</b>		<b>Counselling Grants</b>	
Rita Fitzsimons	HEO	Olive Shanley	HEO
Imelda Martin	EO	Marian Finn	EO
Ann Butler	EO	Greg Ryan	CO
Siobhán Kennedy	CO		
<b>5. Family Mediation Service</b>			
<b>Service Co-Ordinator</b>	Polly Phillimore		
<b>Area Co-Ordinators</b>	Ann O’Kelly* Carmel Savage Jim Sykes* Sheila Healy		
<b>Mediators</b>			
Yvette O’Malley*	Jane Mc Colgan*	Marie Keely*	
Anna Slattery*	Julie Mc Auliffe *	Martin Long*	
Claudia Greene*	Karen Canny*	Niamh Lehane*	
Collette Morrison*	Karen Markey*	Patricia Bolton*	
Colma Nic Aodha Bhui*	Karen Quirke*	Patricia Fleming*	
Eimear Hayden*	Lyle Mc Elderry*	Paula Desmond*	
Fiona Mc Auslan*	Majella Foley-Friel*	Rosemary Hanratty*	
Geoffrey Corry*	Mary Earley*		
<b>Administration</b>			
Anne Troy* / Antoinette O’Donovan*	SO		
<b>Clerical Officers</b>			
Angela Comerford*	Collette O’Connor*	Marie Geraghty*	Rachel O’Donovan
Ann Connor*	Evelyn Mc Garrigle*	Martina Doyle*	Sandra Murphy*
Sandra Murphy*	Helen Golden*	Michelle Coyle-Henry*	Sandra Moran*†
Catherine Kavanagh*	Mairin Ui Fhaoilin*	Noelle O Connell*	Tara O’Connell*
Cecilia Maguire*	Margaret Farrell*	Noreen Mullin*	Margaret Tierney
Claire Connelly			
* Indicates Part-time / Workshare staff			

## **Appendix 4 - Premises**

### **Family Support Agency's Headquarters**

Floor 4, St. Stephens Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2  
Phone: 01-6114100  
Website: [www.fsa.ie](http://www.fsa.ie)  
Email: [info@fsa.ie](mailto:info@fsa.ie)

### **Full-time Family Mediation Service Offices**

**Cork** - Hibernian House, 80A South Mall, Cork  
Phone: 021-4252200

**Dublin** – Floor 1, St Stephens Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2  
Phone: 01-6344320

**Galway** - Floor 1, Ross House, Merchants Road, Galway  
Phone: 091-509730

**Limerick**- 3rd Floor, Riverpoint, Lower Mallow St, Limerick  
Phone: 061- 214310

### **Part Time Family Mediation Service Offices**

**Athlone** – Suite 10, First Floor, Inish Carraig Business Centre, Golden Island, Athlone, Co Westmeath  
Phone: 090- 6420970

**Blanchardstown** - West End House, West End Business Park, Snugborough Road Extension, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15  
Phone: 01-8118650

**Castlebar** -C/o Family Centre, Chapel Street, Castlebar, Co Mayo  
Phone: 094- 9035120

**Dundalk**- 10 Seatown, Dundalk, Co Louth  
Phone: 042 - 9359410

**Letterkenny** – 3<sup>rd</sup>. Floor, Riverfront House, Pearse Road, Letterkenny  
Phone: 074-9102240

**Portlaoise** – Level 2, Grattan House, Grattan Business Centre, Portlaoise, Co. Laois  
Phone: 057-8695730

**Raheny** - Skillings House, 1<sup>st</sup> floor offices, Raheny Shopping Centre, Howth Rd, Dublin 5  
Phone: (01)8510730

**Sligo**- Level 6, The Quayside Shopping Centre, Wine St, Sligo.  
Phone: (071) 9154260.

**Tallaght** - The Rere, Tallaght Social Services Centre, The Square, Tallaght, Dublin 24  
Phone: 01-4145180

**Tralee** – Unit 2, Market Place, Maine Street, Tralee, Co Kerry  
Phone: 066-7186100

**Waterford** – 13B Wallace House, Maritana Gate, Canada Street, Waterford  
Phone: 051- 860460

**Wexford** – 32 Key West, Custom House Quay, Wexford  
Phone: 053- 63050

## **Appendix 5 - 2009 Financial Statements**