

The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Achievements, 2009



Contents

Preface	ii
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	6
Outlines context and background to the Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme	
FRC Resources and Funding	8
Provides a description of the resources available to FRCs in 2009 – in terms of personnel and funding	
What do Family Resource Centres do?	13
Provides a description of what the projects do – demonstrating in particular the diversity of activities engaged in by FRCs	
What have FRCs Achieved - Outcomes and Impacts?	23
Provides a summary of the main outcomes and impacts for communities as a result of the work of FRCs	
What made these Achievements possible?	45
Contains an analysis of how these achievements were possible; what has helped and what has hindered the work as it progressed	
Appendix One:	49
A list of contributing FRCs	
Appendix Two:	52
A list of Target Groups for the FRCs	
Appendix Three:	53
A list of Development Themes / Issues for FRCs	
Abbreviations	54

Preface

It gives me great pleasure, as Chief Executive of the Family Support Agency, to present the data furnished by 104 Family Resource Centres as part of this SPEAK 2009 National Report.

The data highlights the dedication and commitment that volunteers, voluntary management committees and staff have to the programme and to the work of their local projects in delivering community supports and services for families and the most vulnerable in our society.

The SPEAK system (Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge-networking) affords the voluntary management committees and staff of Family Resource Centres the opportunity to evaluate their work, to inform planning for the coming year and to share information among centres relating to successes achieved and challenges faced during the year.

The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme funds Family Resource Centres in 107 communities nationwide. Each of these centres is unique and grounded in its respective local community. Over the next year or so we hope to publish data from each of the 107 Family Resource Centres in the country, thereby increasing the knowledge of the programme and developing an awareness of the importance of annual evaluation for each Family Resource Centre and for the Family Support Agency.

In preparing for the official launch of this report I could not help but comment on a few striking statistics. For example, in 2009 a total of 3,729 people volunteered with Family Resource Centres either in a management or volunteer staff capacity. This figure demonstrates the strong connection that exists between Family Resource Centres and the communities within which they are located.

The strength of this connection is emphasised by the fact that 154,793 people were advised or given information by their local Family Resource Centre. A further 75,948 people were referred onwards to other organisations or services. On average, each of the 107 centres that contributed data to this report provided information and advice directly to 1,488 people in 2009.

I invite you to have a read through the 2009 Speak National Report and see for yourself the inputs, outputs and impacts that the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme is having at a local, regional and national level.

The Family Support Agency looks forward to working with the Family Resource Centre National Forum, the 107 Family Resource Centres throughout the country and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs to ensure the continued success of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme.

I would like to particularly thank West Training & Development Ltd. for compiling this report on behalf of the Family Support Agency and SPEAK Consulting Ltd. for maintaining the SPEAK FRC National Database.

To the voluntary management committees, volunteers and staff of the Family Resource Centres I say thank you for your dedication and commitment to the programme and congratulations on your excellent endeavours to date.

Pat Bennett

**Chief Executive Officer
Family Support Agency**

Executive Summary

This report is based on information provided for 2009 by 104 FRCs, using the SPEAK FRC (Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge-networking) system. The information from each FRC is collated into a national programme database.

Project resources and funding

- Since 2004, as is typical within locally based community development activities, significantly more women than men have played an active role within FRCs.
- Calculated at the minimum wage level, the contribution made by volunteers to implementing FRC action-plans (as distinct from, and in addition to, their contribution as Voluntary Management Committee members) was worth € 5.4 million during 2009. Calculated at the average industrial wage it was worth € 13.5 million.
- In a notable change to previous years, many FRCs identified fundraising events, charitable donations and income earned from the provision of resources (e.g. room rental) as sources of additional income during 2009.
- The period 2008 to 2009 saw a decline in the average total FRC operational budget of 12.9% to € 340,788.75 (including core funding and funding leveraged from other sources).
- Core funding to FRCs, as a percentage of overall funding, has increased slightly from 40% to 41% during the period 2008 to 2009.
- FSA core funding is an enabler for FRCs to lever other funding – most significantly for employment under the FÁS Community Employment Programme, and for the employment of staff in childcare programmes.

Which target groups are FRCs working with?

(For full list of target groups see Appendix 2)

- In previous years (2006, 2007 and 2008), most staff time was spent working with women, children and family units. During 2009, the unemployed joined this cohort as the third most frequently engaged with target group. This trend seems set to continue.

-
- As in previous years (2006, 2007 and 2008), the least amount of staff time is spent working with gay and lesbian communities, farmers, drug users and Travellers.

Which working partners are FRCs working with?

- FRCs work with a wide variety of working partners. These include government departments and statutory agencies as well as national and local service providers.
- 2009 saw considerable increases in time spent working with local Vocational Education Committees and with the Family Support Agency.

What have FRCs achieved?

FRC outputs and impacts can be broadly summarised under four main headings in relation to the extent to which FRCs:

1. Provide contact and participation points for the most excluded sections of communities.

- In 2009, FRCs invested an average of 7.7% of their time providing information.
- A total of 154,793 people were advised directly by an FRC and a further 75,948 people were referred onwards to other information providers.
- Information concerning social welfare rights and entitlements, housing and personal debt were the topics addressed with most individuals seeking information.
- In 2009, FRCs invested 11.6% of their total time providing resources (an increase on the equivalent proportion of 10.2% for 2008 and 8.8% for 2007).
- There were 33,676 visits by local community, voluntary and support groups to use FRC facilities/premises. This is a considerable increase on the 28,859 visits made during 2008.
- FRC facilities/premises were used 19,725 times in 2009 by local groups for meetings (a significant increase on the 2008 figure of 16,085).

- The availability of meeting space within local communities also benefits service providers with a city, county or regional remit.
- The range of resources and the types of facilities being made available by FRCs is becoming more varied.
- Many FRCs commented that the welcoming and non-threatening atmosphere within their centres has helped them to become an established and trusted point of information and resources.
- FRCs are successful at cultivating contacts made, by way of information / resource requests, into involving members of the community in other developmental initiatives.

2. Offer a route for further personal progression for people

In 2009, FRCs spent 14.5% of their time providing education and training opportunities, considerably more time than on any other working method (apart from internal operational maintenance tasks).

- There is strong evidence to indicate that FRCs have provided significant and effective supports that have enabled people access employment.
- During 2009, FRCs have been responsible for:
 - 13,710 people having completed training courses
 - 16,642 people having completed educational courses
 - 8,573 people having completed self-development courses.
- In communities where a range of education and training opportunities may exist, FRCs ensure that training is targeted to benefit those most in need.
- For many of those who comprise the target groups of FRCs, it is the way in which FRCs deliver education and training that make it accessible.
- During 2009, FRCs spent 3.7% of their staff time providing counselling supports within local communities and maintaining support groups.
- Over 19,650 individual counselling sessions were delivered within FRCs to 5,389 people.
- In addition to the provision of counselling sessions for individuals, FRCs also maintained 439 self-help support groups during 2009. These groups comprise largely of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Lone Parent Support Groups.

3. Promote self-reliance and autonomy

- In total FRCs dedicated 8.8% of their time in 2009 to providing help for existing community and voluntary groups, or to setting up groups, networks or initiatives.
- During 2009, almost 1,500 existing community and voluntary groups were supported:
 - 702 were helped with accessing funding opportunities.
 - 400 were helped in developing their organisational or management structures.
 - 364 groups were helped in tackling particular development or policy issues.
- In total, 274 new groups, networks or initiatives were established.
- Since 2004, FRCs have contributed to the establishment of 1,272 groups. Data has been recorded in relation to 667 of these groups. 23,324 people participate in these groups. Furthermore, these groups, networks and initiatives employ a total of 2,997.5 people (full-time equivalents) and are known to have attracted funding of € 712, 089.
- Working on Community arts accounted for 1.4% of FRC staff time.
- During 2009, 44 new community arts initiatives were established bringing the total number of active community arts initiatives supported by FRCs to 230.
- Many FRCs used community arts as a way of involving particular sections of their communities that may have been difficult to access through other developmental approaches.

4. Build working partnerships and influence policy

- During 2009, FRC staff spent 3.8% of their time contributing to local networks.
- Networking associated with education, employment and (to a lesser degree) enterprise, has increased markedly during 2009.
- In 2009, FRCs committed 2.5% of their total time to policy-linked work.
- Positive impacts, as a result of this work, were reported in relation to gathering information about how changes in national policy affect service delivery at local level and how FRCs can influence and adapt to such changes.

-
- Other impacts relate to FRCs' ability to influence policy development through contributing to decision making from a position informed by working at ground level.

What made the successes of FRCs possible?

- The majority of FRCs identified the dedication and capacity of staff and volunteers as the main factor leading to the success of FRCs.
- The continued availability of core funding and leveraged funding.
- With the passing of time, FRCs have become more established within their communities and more highly regarded by their working partners.
- The existence of a dedicated programme support structure was noted for its contribution toward maintaining a community development focus to the work of FRCs and also for facilitating collective responses among FRCs.

What did FRCs see as hindering their work during 2009?

- The most significant barrier to progress cited by FRCs related to the need for additional resources, including additional staff, additional funding and premises.
- In addition, some FRCs identified the need for specific training to be undertaken in advance of particular pieces of work being undertaken.
- It was also noted by some FRCs that the lack of adequate supporting services (particularly childcare facilities) can hinder their capacity to facilitate initiatives to tackle identified needs.

Introduction

In 1994, to mark the International Year of the Family, the Department of Social Welfare funded 10 Family Resource Centres (FRCs) on a 3 year pilot basis. This decision was motivated by the perception of a gap in statutory support for community development activities focused on support for families and tackling child poverty. These FRCs were to focus on developing the skill levels and capacities of their local communities, to encourage communities to become self reliant and self directed.

An evaluation of the work of these FRCs was published in 1997. The key recommendation of the report was that funding of these FRCs should be mainstreamed by the Department as a Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme (FCSRC). The report of the Commission on the Family in 1998 also recommended an expansion of the programme.

The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme provides financial assistance to FRCs to assist with the staffing and equipping of local Family Resource Centres which provide a focal point for community development activities. There are now 107 FRCs in the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme; 104 of these are operational and 3 are in pre-development.

Since May 2003 the Family Support Agency has overall responsibility for management of the programme, including monitoring and support of centres, financial administration and executive decision making. Responsibility for the Family Support Agency transferred to the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2010.

The emphasis in the centres is on the involvement of local communities in developing approaches to tackle the problems they face and on creating successful partnerships between the voluntary and statutory agencies in the areas concerned.

Supports provided by FRCs are designed to meet the needs of the local community. They include:

- Practical assistance to individuals and community groups such as access to information technology and office facilities.
- The provision of information, advice and support to target groups and families.
- The provision of counselling and support to individuals and groups.
- Delivering education courses and training opportunities.
- Practical assistance to existing community groups such as help with organisational structures, assistance with accessing funding or advice on how to address specific social issues.

-
- The establishment and maintenance of new community groups to meet local needs and the delivery of services at local level (for example, childcare facilities, after-school clubs, men's groups, etc.)
 - Supporting personal and group development through the use of community arts.

Compiling this Report

This report is based on information relevant to 2009 provided by all 104 FRCs using the SPEAK (Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge-networking) system.

Following the completion of the 2009 self-evaluation cycle, each FRC submitted data returns to the Family Support Agency (by March 31st, 2010). Each return was then subjected to an initial inspection to identify potentially erroneous data entries. In total 174 separate data entries relating to the returns of 80 FRCs were identified as atypical or unexpected. Each of these entries was queried via email and telephone with the relevant FRC. In each case, judgement regarding the accuracy of the data entered was made by the FRC coordinator. Any amendments to the data were made at FRC level. All 104 data returns were then collated into a national programme database that is accessible to all stakeholders within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. Analysis of the database informed this report.

FRC Resources and Funding

FRC Management, Staff and Volunteers

The contribution of volunteers is central to the success of FRCs. Volunteers not only work to help FRC staff implement the organisation's action plan (see below), they also act as managers of FRCs. All FRCs have Voluntary Management Committee members drawn from the communities within which they are located. Critically, they ensure that FRCs are informed of, and responsive to, local needs and emerging issues and are accountable to the communities within which they are located. A key characteristic of FRCs is that they have flexibility to identify and respond to emerging issues, groups and needs before these register with the statutory sector.

In 2009, a total of 985 people served as Voluntary Management Committee members within FRCs. Collectively, they contributed more than 42,840 hours fulfilling the duties associated with this role. The average number of Voluntary Management Committee members active within each FRC has fallen from just under 11 in 2008 to 9 in 2009. Men comprised 29% of Voluntary Management Committee members during this period. Nine FRCs have no male representation on their Voluntary Management Committees while a further 52 FRCs have two men or less.

Representation of marginalised sub-groups on FRC Voluntary Management Committees

It is central to the community development approach adopted by FRCs that members of targeted sub-groups within local communities – those most likely to benefit from the work of an FRC – are active at all levels of decision making within each FRC.

Figure 1 demonstrates that, as in 2008, the two most represented target groups during 2009 were women and older people. For the fourth consecutive year, Travellers, drug users and gay and lesbian communities remain the least represented target groups.

Of course, not all target groups will be present within any single community within which an FRC may be located. For example, drugs may not be a problem in some communities; consequently, there may be no drug users to represent on the local FRC's Voluntary Management Committee. However, it may be reasonable to assume that some target groups such as lesbian and gay communities exist throughout Ireland.

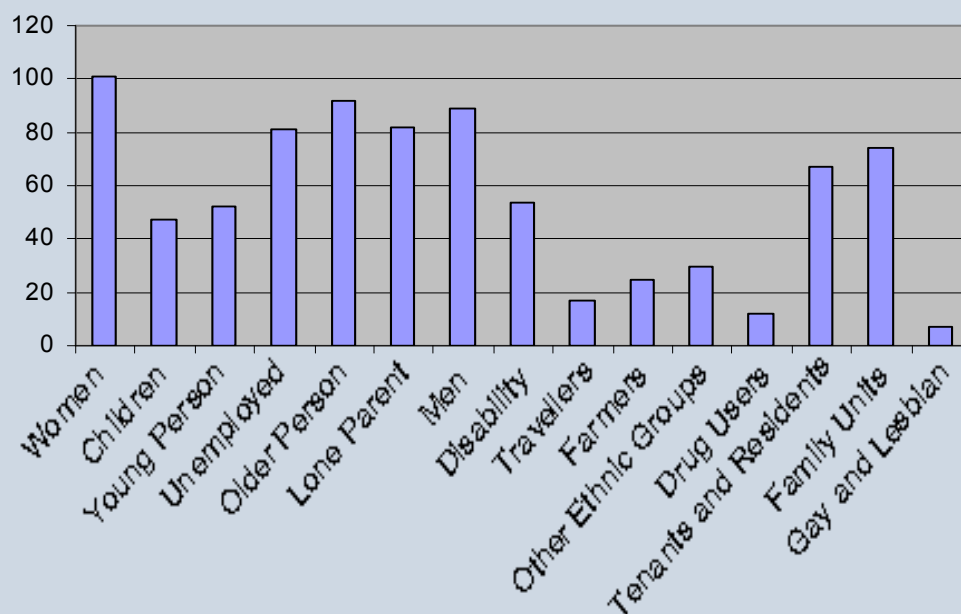
It is clear from Figure 1 that FRCs are finding it challenging to include some target groups on their Voluntary Management Committees. This may be because membership of some target groups carries a perceived stigma that acts to dissuade people from identifying themselves with this group. Alternatively, it may be that the role of Voluntary Management Committee is not of widespread interest.

One FRC commented that:

“We did have... Travellers on our committee but the Travellers have said that they do not want to be committed to attending meetings but they will help out whenever we need them and they have been doing this to date.”

Forward Steps FRC

Figure 1: Target Group representation on Voluntary Management Committees, 2009



The Role of Volunteers and Staff in implementing the FRC action plan

All FRCs have 'core' staff, funded by the FSA. In 2009, this core staff comprised 310 people filling 251 full-time equivalent positions. As with FRCs' Voluntary Management Committees, significantly more women than men comprise the staff bodies of FRCs. In total, men accounted for 13% of all core funded FRC staff.

Alongside their core staff, a large proportion of FRCs also employ staff funded through other sources. Combined, the 104 FRCs employ a further 1,056 people in 623 full-time equivalent positions funded through additional sources. This figure represents a reduction of 106 full-time equivalent positions when compared with the 2008 figure of 729. This reduction in employment is considerable and, most likely, reflects the difficulties that FRCs are experiencing in attracting funding additional to their core budget allocations.

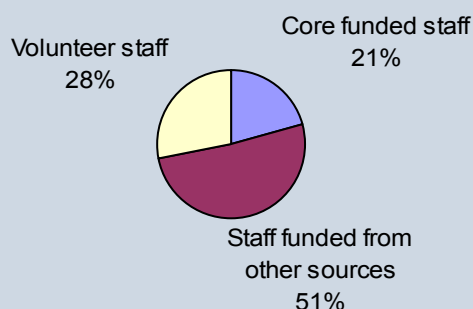
In addition to the professional staff mentioned above, 2,744 voluntary staff members contributed the equivalent of 343 full-time workers across the 104 FRCs during 2009. This contribution, made by vol-

unteers, is distinct from the voluntary contribution made at management committee level. In this context, FSA core funding can be seen as an enabler for leveraging other funding – most significantly for employment under the FÁS Community Employment Programme, and for the employment of staff in childcare programmes.

Calculated at the minimum wage level, the contribution made by volunteers to implementing FRC action-plans (as distinct from, and in addition to, their contribution as Voluntary Management Committee members) was worth €5.4 million during 2009. Calculated at the level of average earnings it was worth €13.5 million.¹

The enabling function of the ‘core funding’ provided by the Family Support Agency is demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Breakdown of FRC staff by Funding Source, 2009



On average, 26.4 people contributed voluntarily to implementing FRC activities and programmes in each FRC during 2009. When compared to the 2008 average of 23 volunteers per FRC and the 2007 average of 20 people per FRC, there is evidence of a pattern of greater voluntary involvement within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme.

There is some evidence to suggest that this increase in voluntary contribution may be the result of a lack of opportunities to access paid employment.

“Over the past year we have dramatically increased the number of volunteers that are working with us in part due to more people being available because of a lack of paid employment...if we did not have the involvement of these volunteers we would be unable to offer computer training to older learners nor we would not be able to run the Rainbows Programme”

Loughrea Family Resource Centre

¹ The National Minimum Wage Act 2000 provides that the minimum wage rate for an experienced adult employee from 1 July 2007 is € 8.65 an hour. The average hourly earnings (as at quarter 3, 2009) across all sectors is € 21.60 per hour (CSO, April 2010).

However, motives for volunteering within FRCs remain many and varied:

“During 2009, one individual volunteered 35 hours per week for the year to enhance her Masters qualification and gain on-the-job experience. Two other individuals volunteered on a half week basis each and assisted in administration. One individual was seeking permanent status in the country and volunteered her time to the organisation to improve her communication skills. The second individual volunteered her time so as to feel useful.”

Le Chéile FRC, Mallow

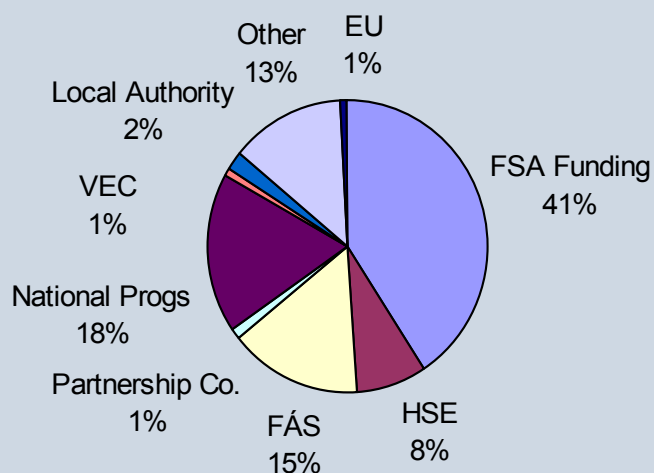
FRC Funding Sources

Core funding granted by the Family Support Agency to the 104 FRCs that contributed to the national programme database in 2009 amounted to €14,470,646, an average of €139,141 per FRC.

During the same period FRCs attracted a further € 20,971,384 from other funding sources bringing the total operating budget of all FRCs to € 35,442,030.

Figure 3, below, provides a breakdown of all funding sources accessed by FRCs during 2009.

Figure 3: Percentage of total FRC funding from all sources, 2009



While the capacity of FRCs to draw funding from a variety of sources external to the programme remains strong, the period 2008 to 2009 saw a decline in the average overall FRC budget of 12.9% to € 340,788.75. Core funding to FRCs, as a percentage of overall funding, has increased slightly from 40% to 41% during the same period.

ing, as a percentage of overall funding, from 4% to 1%.

'Other' funding accounted for 13% of overall FRC funding and refers to a wide range of public and private funding sources. Larger amounts tended to be identified with Pobal, the County Childcare Committees, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Local/Regional Drugs Task Forces. The most common sources for smaller grants were the Dormant Accounts Scheme and the Katherine Howard Foundation.

In a notable change to previous years, many FRCs identified fundraising events, charitable donations and income earned from the provision of resources (e.g. room rental) as sources of additional income during 2009.

What do Family Resource Centres do?

A Community Development Approach to Family Support

FRCs work to involve local families and communities in a process wherein they develop their own approaches to tackle the problems they face and the skills to enable them to do so effectively.

To enable this developmental process to take place at community level, FRCs employ a range of working methods. These include:

- Practical assistance to individuals and community groups such as access to information technology and office facilities.
- The provision of information, advice and support to target groups and families in the area.
- The provision of counselling and support to individuals and groups.
- Delivering education courses and training opportunities.
- Practical assistance to existing community groups such as help with organisational structures, assistance with accessing funding or advice on how to address specific social issues.
- The establishment and maintenance of new community groups to meet local needs and the delivery of services at local level (for example, childcare facilities, after-school clubs, etc.).
- Networking with relevant working partners and creating successful partnerships between the voluntary and statutory agencies in the areas concerned.
- Contributing to relevant social policy fora.
- Supporting personal and group development through the use of community arts.

Figure 4: Percentage of FRC time enabling effective governance, working in partnership and working with target groups, 2009

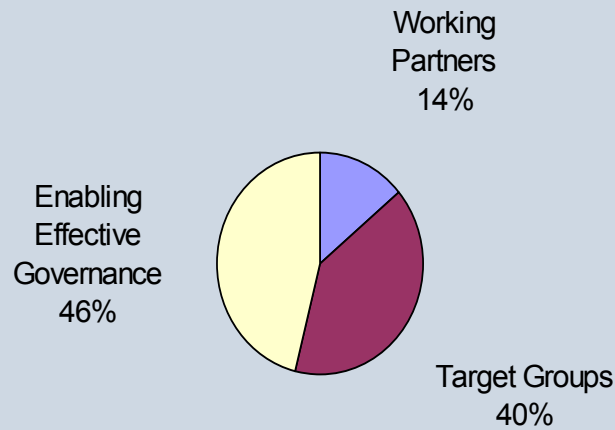
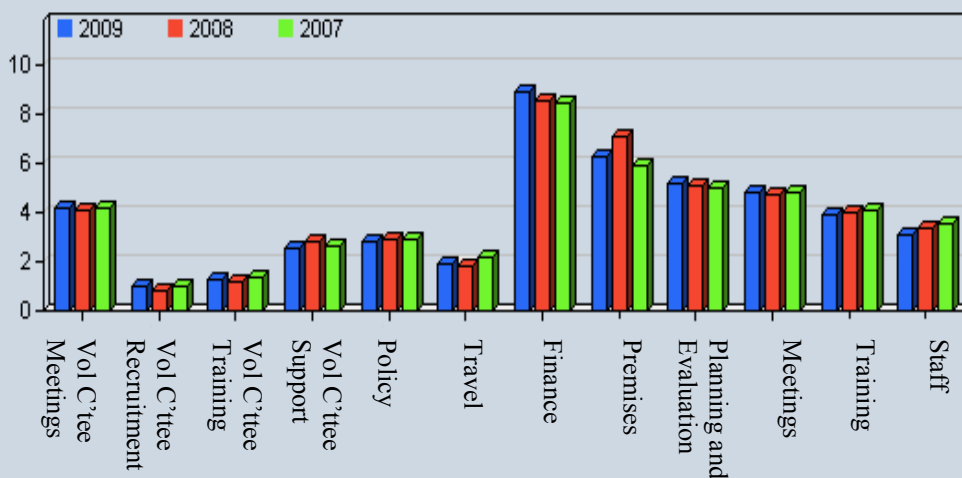


Figure 5, below, indicates the aggregated time commitment of all FRC staff toward various internal organisational maintenance tasks. A key element of this work is supporting volunteers and developing volunteers' skills. While the fulfilment of these tasks is necessary to ensure compliance with company and employment law as well as with the regulations associated with the administration of funding from public and private sources, there is also a considerable developmental benefit that accrues from this work.

Through completing these tasks Voluntary Management Committees accumulate a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience of acting as managers, organisers and leaders. This contributes directly to the development of capacity within local communities and to a legacy of community leadership capacity.

Figure 5: Time committed to Maintenance Tasks, 2007- 2009



Issue and Challenges facing Local Communities

All FRCs work is informed by an assessment of local need. At the start of the 2009 evaluation cycle, FRCs' Voluntary Management Committees and staff identified a number of key challenges relating to the year ahead. While the challenges envisioned were varied, reflecting the diversity of communities within which FRCs operate, a number of common themes were identifiable.

Firstly, a number of FRCs mentioned the challenges relating to the maintenance or development of their internal capacity.

Ensuring that all sections of the community are represented at each and every level of decision making within FRCs represents a constant challenge to FRCs:

“To encourage and support the continued involvement and participation of all sections of the local community in the management, planning and evaluation of the work of the FRC.”

St Johnston & Carrigans FRC

The extent of the contribution, in both time and skills, required from Voluntary Management Committee members ensures that FRCs must maintain a constant focus on providing adequate support to those fulfilling this role:

“The FRC held its Annual General Meeting in September realising a 33% change in membership on the Management Committee. While this development was very much welcomed as all of the new members were recruited through their participation in various FRC programmes it also required additional effort over subsequent months to acquaint them with the background to the work, the history and methodology of the FRC as well as what would be required of them in terms of their roles and responsibilities.”

Raphoe Family Resource Centre

It is also the case that an exceptional level of commitment can be required from Voluntary Management Committee members from time to time, such as when an FRC is moving premises:

“The VMC and staff made a huge time commitment to the premises...through liaisons with architects, council personnel, contractors and all necessary work incurred in preparation associated with the construction of the new premises.”

Arden View Community & Family Resource Centre

Uncertainty relating to the future of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme has also impacted upon the morale of Voluntary Management Committee members within

the programme:

“The uncertainty for the FRC following the publication of the McCarthy Report [*Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes* – wherein the future of the Family Support Agency and its programmes was called into question] was of great concern to both voluntary Boards of Management and staff.”

Droichead Family Resource Centre

“The uncertainty after the Mc Carthy recommendations left many of the Board and staff fearful and de-motivated.”

Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Secondly, FRCs identified a number of challenges associated with meeting the needs of target groups. Principle among these was the continued growth in numbers of those becoming unemployed:

“2009 was a year of immense financial strain on the Cobh community. Unemployment increased dramatically, resulting in an influx of service users who were experiencing mental health, stress, job loss and financial management difficulties. We had a particularly high number of young men using our centre for Back to Education support, personal development, health and safety courses as well as information and resources to assist them.”

Cobh Family Resource Centre Ltd.

“The increase in [the number of] unemployed people in the area challenged the Centre to reach out and to encourage them to avail of services in the Centre or in other Centres in the area.”

Killinarden Family Resource Centre

As in previous years, meeting the needs of lone parents, older people and isolated men, along with a lack of adequate childcare facilities, posed a major challenge to FRCs:

“Support for lone parents, older people and those experiencing mental health problems (particularly isolated men) have all been identified as key issues. Lack of adequate child care facilities and places means the needs of young children and families are not adequately met. This particularly affects women in the area as the main care givers.”

Dunmanway FRC

Thirdly, FRCs cited the impact of decision making within the political and economic sphere as having a notable effect on their work. The uncertainty surrounding the continued support of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, and the support of the community and voluntary

sector in general, was repeatedly cited as challenging by FRCs:

“The challenges we faced this year were in relation to funding our services and the increased demand for information and services from people who were made redundant.”

Ballyogan Family Resource Centre

“Challenges during 2009 were mainly funding related...with regard to funding there was a definite reduction in the availability and amount of small, once-off grants. This has obviously affected the costs of programmes and courses and, therefore, their availability to many people. This being said, there has been a great increase in the need for relevant courses enabling and empowering people who are unemployed.”

Breffni Community Dev. Co. Ltd.

Linked to the uncertainty of continued funding was the recognition that services were more in demand than ever before:

“Some of the main challenges posed for Clann FRC were the rising demands and needs of the community due to rising unemployment and underemployment. The lack of confidence in statutory providers and financial institutions posed many fears and challenges for Clann FRC’s target groups. An increase in demand for information, advice, support, resources and services meant an increased workload for staff.”

Clann FRC

As in 2008, on-going difficulties relating to the provision of funding for childcare services was noted by many FRCs:

“The NCIP [National Childcare Investment Programme] fee structure presented ongoing challenges in terms of increased fees.”

Hospital Family Resource Centre

“As submission for [National Childcare Investment Programme] subvention only happens twice yearly the project has to try to cover the cost of any new children using the service until the subventions forms are re-submitted.”

Newpark Close FRC

For many rural FRCs, difficulties associated with a lack of transport and broadband availability were frequently identified as a key challenge facing local communities:

“Access to services is a challenge and transport continues to be a particular issue, essential

for taking part in any after-school or community activity.”

Downstrands Family Resource Centre

“To get a community petition to establish the need [for broadband services] and use this to lobby politicians.”

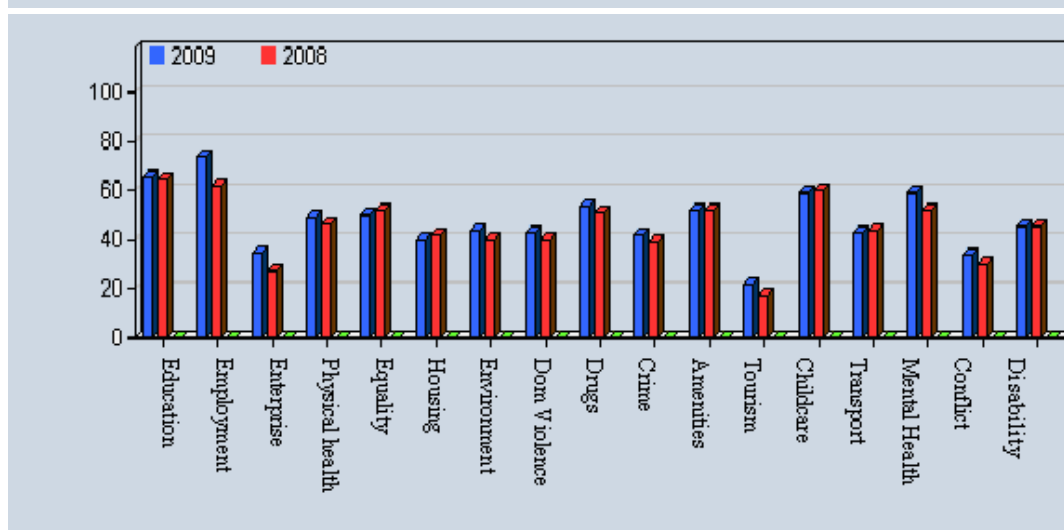
Cáirdeas FRC, Kilmovee

Figure 6, below, demonstrates that employment, education, childcare and mental health are the issues accorded the highest priority by Voluntary Management Committee members in 2009. Employment and mental health saw the two most significant increases associated with prioritising issues facing local communities. The link between these two issues was noted by a number of FRCs:

“The harsh reality of the economic down turn is that social problems and unemployment is rising, as a result the pressures on families are increasing. Without doubt this has affected the mental health of individuals.”

Clara Community & Family Support Centre Ltd.

Figure 6: Key Issues identified by Voluntary Management Committee members and Staff, 2008 and 2009



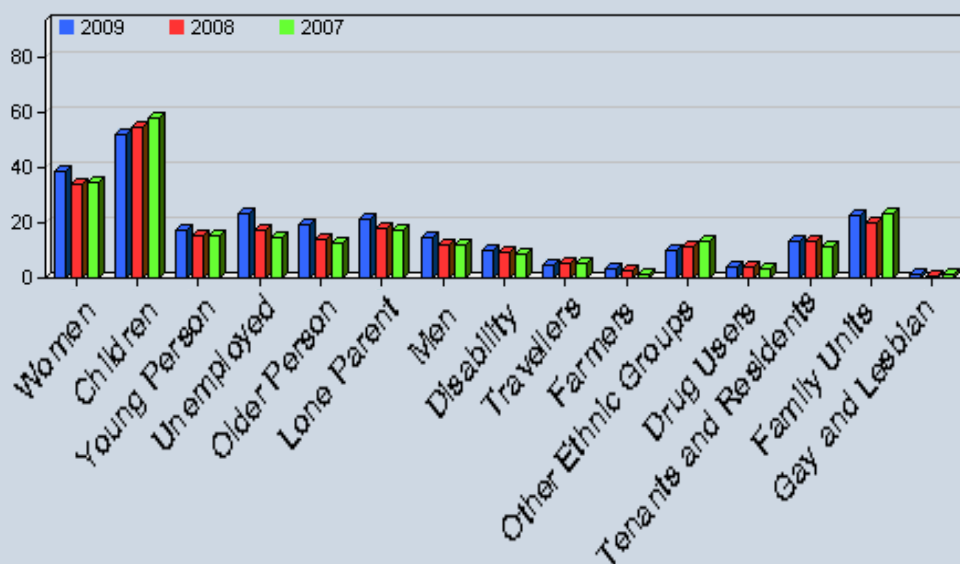
In addressing these and other issues identified locally, FRCs have been engaged in:

- Making links and building relationships with local people who belong to various target groups.
- Establishing and developing both strategic and working alliances with a range of working partners - mainly statutory agencies and service providers at local level.
- Delivering a programme of work and targeted intervention that is informed by the FRCs' ongoing understanding of family and community needs.

Work with Target Groups

Figure 7 shows the percentage distribution of time FRCs spent working with the different target groups.²

Figure 7: Percentage of time spent with individual Target Groups, 2007 - 2009



As in 2007 and 2008, 2009 saw most staff time was spent working with children and women. When considering Figure 7 it should be noted that members of the community experiencing multiple disadvantage are often categorised as members of more than one target group. For example, an unemployed woman is likely to be categorised as both a 'woman' and as 'unemployed'.

Notwithstanding this, the target group receiving the greatest increase in time commitment from FRCs during 2009 was the unemployed; followed closely by lone parents, women and family units.

A number of FRCs recorded particular successes in relation to specific target groups during 2009. These include:

"In 2009, the Resource Centre did not initiate any project specifically aimed at the gay and lesbian community. However, since completing awareness training, staff have achieved a greater measure of approachability as well as a level of insight that translates into the Centre becoming a more welcoming place for gay and lesbian people."

Kells People's Resource Centre

"A huge focus of my work this year is working with ethnic minority groups. We established the Fáilte Isteach programme in Blanchardstown with the hope that we will roll it out in

² As target groups are not mutually exclusive percentages will not total to 100%.

Mountview next year. I completed the training and began to tutor people with very little English. I had to identify volunteers who would also become tutors. We have a large group of tutors and people seeking help meeting weekly. It has been a huge success.”

Mountview Family Resource Centre

“There was an increase in the number of men accessing our services and resources in 2009. This was due to the significant increase in unemployment among young men. Men participated at all levels of provision, i.e. Management; Toddler's Inc; Homework Club; Le Chéile International Club, Counselling; Computers; Providing information.”

Shannon Family Resource Centre Ltd.

“I have set up a mother and toddlers group which a lot a grandparents come along to as they are minding their grandchildren as they are too young for the ‘Young at Hearts’ group, so it’s great for them to mix with other grandparents.”

Ballyboden Family Resource Centre

“Issues of tenants and residents were paramount in 2009. The Redevelopment Steering Group and Estate Management Forum both had an involvement in the proposed redevelopment of the Rosemount Court Complex. The de-tenanting process which began in late 2009 involved many meetings of local tenants, local authority representatives, councillors and TDs. The Resource Centre provided practical supports such as meeting space and admin support. Our development worker hosted a weekly information clinic and acted as a "go between" for local residents who had poor English and the local authority.”

Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.

“There has been a lot of support given to the Traveller Support Group this year. Within the Traveller interagency committee we have successfully secured a dedicated worker for the Travellers in County Monaghan. I sit on the subgroup to support and help implement the workplan for the Traveller project.”

Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC

Working in Partnership with other Organisations

‘Working partners’ refer to the broad range of government departments, statutory organisations and national / local service providers with whom FRCs have established ongoing relationships. Figure 8 shows that FRCs have spent significantly less time working with FÁS during 2009 than in previous years. For the first time, FRCs spent more time working with local voluntary organisations such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, than with FÁS.

Notwithstanding this, FÁS is still recognised as a valuable working partner by FRCs:

“We have three staff funded by FÁS. Therefore, we would not be able to provide the pre-school service without their input.”

Bandon FSG

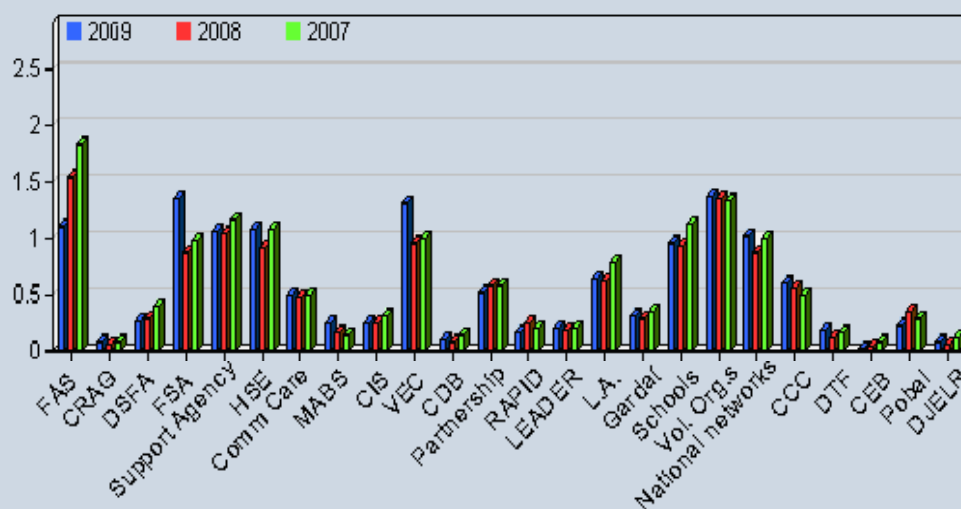
This shift in time spent with different working partners during 2009 may have been dictated, to a greater or lesser degree, by a perceived shift in the relative abilities of voluntary and statutory organisations to fund FRC operations:

“Working with voluntary organisations such as the Volunteer Bureau and St Vincent de Paul allowed us to maintain and expand our programmes in 2009 despite cutbacks in funding and other resources.”

Rosemount Community Development Group

Considerable increases in time spent working with local Vocational Education Committees and with the Family Support Agency were also recorded during 2009.

Figure 8: Percentage of time spent with individual Working Partners, 2007 - 2009



FRCs assess, on a yearly basis, the effectiveness of their working relationship with these agencies. FRCs reported the highest level of satisfaction in their working relationships with the core funders, The Family Support Agency, for example:

“In terms of working partners, our main streams of funding are from Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the FSA, with the result that considerable time and ef-

fort is allocated to the maintenance and development of successful working partnerships with both departments/agencies.”

Breffni Community Dev. Co. Ltd.

“We work very closely with the FSA. Since the news that the Support Agency will discontinue we have been engaging more.”

Droichead na Daoine

Working relationships with Regional Support Agencies, national networks, local voluntary organisations and local schools were also valued highly by FRCs.

What have FRCs achieved? Outcomes and Impacts

FRC outcomes and impacts can be broadly summarised under four main headings:

1. The extent to which they provide points of contact and access to participation and services for the most excluded sections of communities. This encompasses provision of information and resources to individuals and groups.
2. The extent to which they offer a route for further personal progression for people in their communities, e.g. via provision of training and educational opportunities, access to employment or counselling supports.
3. The extent to which they promote self-reliance and autonomy and contribute to stronger and more dynamic community 'infrastructure', by helping existing community groups and establishing new community groups or networks.
4. The extent to which they provide an important source of knowledge, experience and expertise in the fields of family support, social inclusion and equality, and the extent to which they can make a positive contribution to building partnerships and influencing policy through local networking and policy work.

Enhancing Contact and Participation

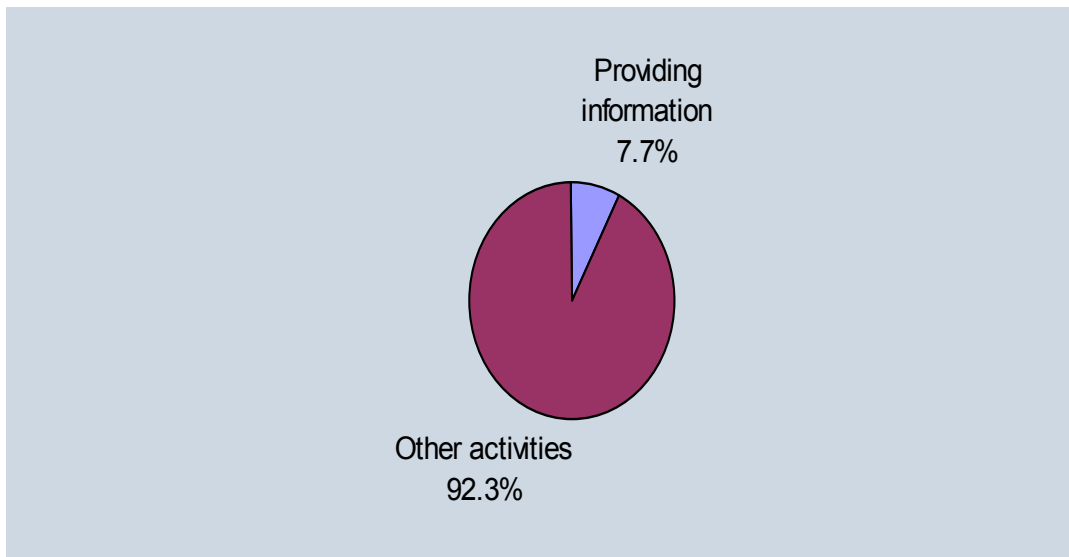
Providing Information

In 2009, FRCs invested an average of 7.7% of their time providing information. Through the work of FRCs, information is provided to individuals within the community and to groups active within the community. A distinction is also made between people who were given advice directly, and people who were referred on to other agencies or services. FRCs play a key role as a bridge between local communities and statutory providers.

A total of 154,793 people were advised directly by an FRC and a further 75,948 people were referred onwards to other information providers. The HSE, the VEC and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service remained the services to which people were most frequently referred.

While this figure equates to an average of 2,218 people per FRC being provided with information, or being referred to another information provider, numbers vary considerably across the programme with just two FRCs (Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC in County Monaghan and St. Brigid's Family and Resource Centre in County Waterford) accounting for 43,100 of this total.

Figure 9: Percentage of FRC time spent providing information, 2009



Information concerning social welfare rights and entitlements, housing and personal debt were the topics addressed with most individuals seeking information.

“The demand for information on a one to one basis has increased considerably this year, mostly regarding benefits. We regard this as a positive development in so far as people feel comfortable seeking advice from the centre staff or Information Officers. Telephone queries also increased.”

Mevagh Family Resource Centre

In some cases, FRCs have been very pro-active, by anticipating information needs and developing bespoke local responses:

“We also believe in being proactive and try to anticipate the needs of the community into the future. In 2009, job losses were an unfortunate fact of life for many people. To this end, we prepared an information pack containing all the relevant information and offered free internet and administrative services to the unemployed.”

Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.

Many FRCs commented that the welcoming and non-threatening atmosphere within their centres has helped them to become an established and trusted point of information:

“Our project has an open door policy...we are very approachable and willing to provide information and make people feel comfortable in their quest for information, and we do have the ability to direct callers to the appropriate services.”

St. Matthews Family Centre

“This is an invaluable service to the community as the project has a welcoming friendly atmosphere and the information is given in a way that accounts for literacy issues. It ensures the community are aware of entitlements and the different services available to them.”

Newpark Close FRC

The impact of having accessible information points within local communities is wide ranging. As one FRC noted:

“Examples of the impact of providing information include: individuals have accessed Carers Allowance, Family Income Supplement and Rent Supplement; parents have accessed professional assessment for their children; individuals have been supported to maintain their tenancies; older people have found appropriate accommodation; local groups have accessed funding.”

Le Chéile FRC, Mallow

A number of FRCs have remarked that every approach for information provides the opportunity to establish contact with a new member of the community. This contact can often be developed in such a way as to involve that member of the community in other local initiatives:

“When individuals come to the FRC for information it presents an opportunity to meet and engage with some of the FRC activities, which sometimes results in further involvement and participation in the project.”

Knockmay Family Resource Centre

“As well as helping them with their query, we are also in the position to build relationships with them. This allows us to build up a greater knowledge of the needs of the community, and this forms the basis of all the work we undertake.”

Cara Phort Family Resource Centre

So successful has the provision of information on a one-to-one level been in establishing relationships at community level, that FRCs are now using mass communication methods as a matter of routine:

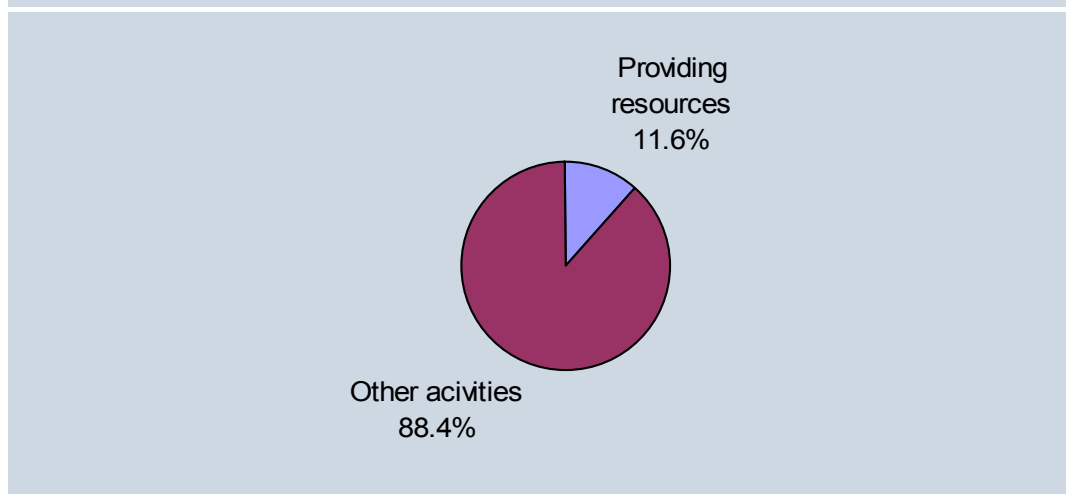
- Over 88% of FRCs produced and circulated a local newsletter in 2009
- Just over 80% used local radio, and 95% used local press, to communicate their activities and programmes
- Almost 14.5% used national radio to contribute to debate on social exclusion issues in 2009
- Over 83% of FRCs used email lists as a method of communication
- Almost a quarter, 24%, of FRCs used the national press during 2009.

Providing Resources

'Providing Resources' relates to the provision of physical and administrative resources in the FRC to individuals or groups. For example, the use of office administration facilities (computer, phone, photocopying, email etc.) or making meeting spaces available for groups to meet.

In 2009, FRCs invested 11.6% of their total time providing resources (an increase on the equivalent proportion of 10.2% for 2008 and 8.8% for 2007).

Figure 10: Percentage of FRC time spent providing resources, 2009



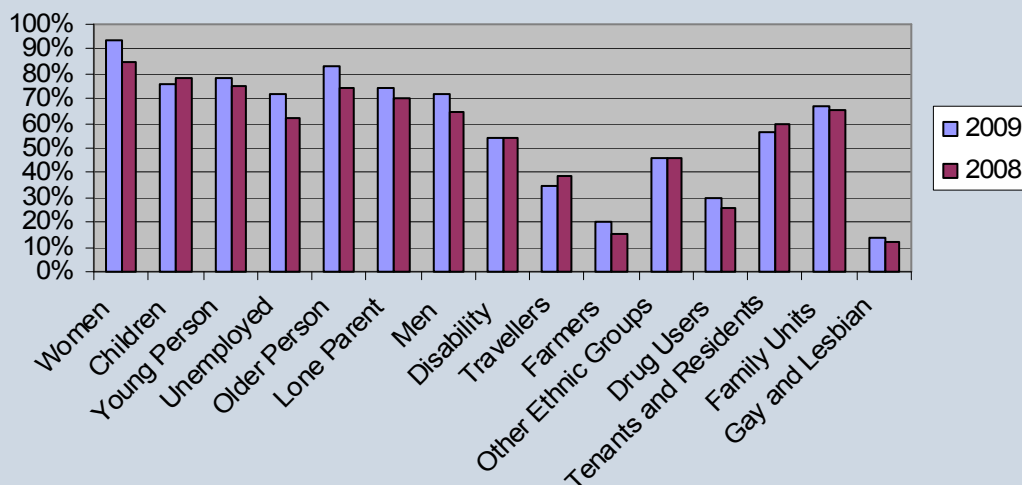
FRCs have recorded significant returns for this investment of time:

Alongside visits by individuals to avail of FRCs' resources, there were 33,676 visits by local community, voluntary and support groups to use FRC facilities/premises. This is a considerable increase on the 28,859 visits made during 2008).

FRC facilities/premises were used a further 19,725 times in 2009 by local groups for meetings (a significant increase on the 2008 figure of 16,085).

Figure 11, overleaf, illustrates the continued importance of the accessibility of FRC resources to groups involved with particular target groups (with women, older people, young people, children and the unemployed remaining the most significant).

Figure 11: Percentage of FRCs providing resources to local groups comprising specific target groups



A much smaller percentage of FRCs are providing front-of-house and administrative resources for groups comprising the gay and lesbian community, farmers and drug users.

Longer-term impacts associated with the provision of resources to individuals tend to relate to the enabling role that FRCs have played in local people accessing training and employment opportunities. For example:

“Approximately 1000 people availed of drop-in services during 2009, including Computer Suite, Administrative Services and Job Group. Almost half of these went on to avail of a second resource provided by Breffni FRC. For example Childcare and Training and Education.”

Breffni Community Dev. Co. Ltd.

“The administration service is beneficial to all the community, including the business community. We have seen an increase in the number of people seeking assistance with C.V. writing and also people surfing the net to access job information. The Library has also seen an increase in numbers. Having the ability to order any book online and delivered to the centre is a valuable resource in a rural community.”

Mevagh Family Resource Centre

In rural areas, an FRC may be the sole provider of open access email and internet facilities. This can enable communication with dispersed family members or virtual communities:

“[The provision of resources] means greater participation by individuals, thus reducing those experiencing isolation.” **Castlebar Le Chéile FRC**

Impacts relating to the use of front-of-house and administrative resources by local community, voluntary and support groups are linked strongly with the benefit of having a focal point where other community, voluntary and support groups can meet. In the absence of a building in which groups can meet, the future of many of these groups may be in doubt. As one FRC put it:

“Without these resources there would be nowhere for the community, youth or older people to meet.”

Hillview Community Resource Centre Ltd.

The importance of FRCs to local community, voluntary and support groups was noted repeatedly by FRCs:

“Our centre acts as a hub for 5 local residents associations and one voluntary youth group. All these services have full access to any office equipment and rooms on the premises, as needed. We also provide similar supports to our anti-racism training group.”

School St FRC

“The centre offers rooms free of charge to voluntary groups and public liability insurance, which can often hinder the progress of groups, is covered by the FRC.”

Shannon Family Resource Centre Ltd.

“A tangible example of this is that for a number of years Al Anon did not meet in Mallow town and families had to travel to Cork city. With the move of Le Chéile FRC to new premises, we were in a position to accommodate a group for Mallow.”

Le Chéile FRC, Mallow

The availability of meeting space within local communities also benefits service providers with a city, county or regional remit. In providing meeting space locally, in a building regarded in a positive light by community members, FRCs act as a conduit between mainstream service providers and local communities:

“Cara House has become more and more popular and central to the life of the community. We have received visits from many HSE departments. Amnesty International, Donegal Area Mental Health Associations and the Simon Community have all used Cara House for meetings.”

Cara House FRC

“Organisations which deliver a confidential, secure outreach service in the south east of County Galway have said that they rely heavily on the availability of Loughrea FRC’s meeting room for the delivery of this service. This applies particularly to the Domestic Violence Support Outreach Service run by COPE Waterside House, the work being carried out by the

ISPC development worker and the 'Teen Between' service offered by Youth Work Ireland."

Loughrea FRC

As is the case with the provision of information, the provision of front-of-house and administrative resources can provide FRCs with an opportunity to develop contact with those accessing FRC resources into increased participation in other FRC activities, such as development initiatives or educational courses.

"Providing resources such as photocopying, and making meeting space available has a knock on effect of attracting people from our target groups that may have been hesitant to come to the centre before."

Shannow Family Resource Centre

It is noteworthy that the range of resources and the types of facilities being made available by FRCs is becoming varied. For example, one FRC is operating a restaurant and another has opened a gymnasium. In rural areas, FRCs are becoming more adept at meeting an identified lack of amenities head on:

"West Sligo had lacked amenities until this resource was established. The FRC has created a facility which has been exceptionally well received by a number of existing groups like the GAA and soccer clubs. We have...an indoor hurling club and have facilities which have supported an active age group. We have access to land, some of which has been developed to host a number of FETAC Horticultural projects and has encouraged the Men's Group to begin to grow produce, which is consumed on the premises in an 'Eat well, be well' programme."

Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd.

The variety of resources being made available to communities through FRCs was encapsulated by one FRC:

"The facilities and amenities within the FRC are widely used by the community of St Johnston & Carrigans...ranging from the use of a photocopier, computer or internet access, to borrowing teapots for a wake"

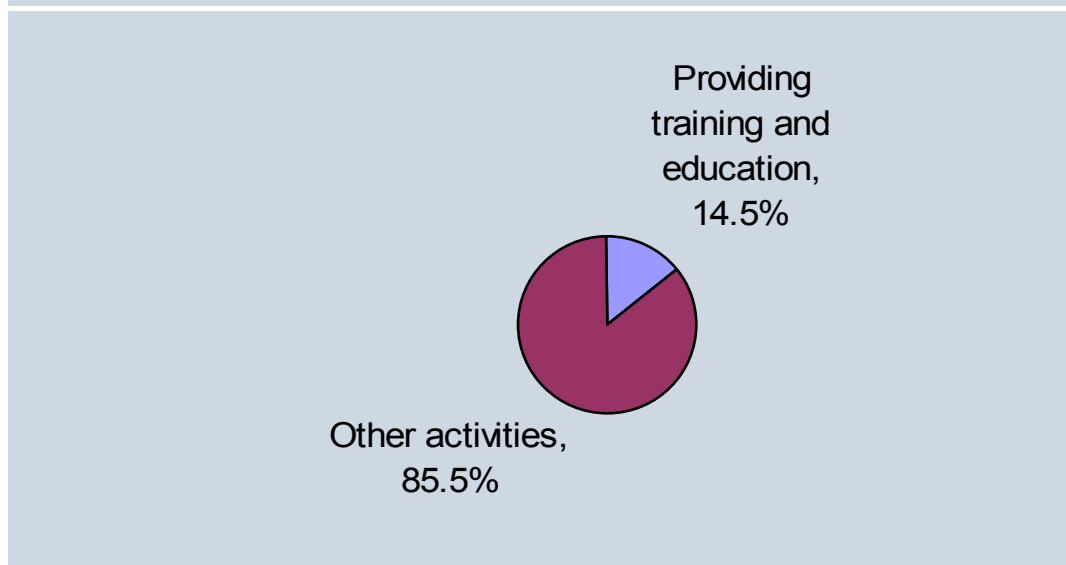
St Johnston & Carrigans FRC

Progression

Providing education and training

The provision of education and training opportunities is a core activity for many FRCs. This working method has consistently accounted for an increased time commitment from FRCs. In 2009, FRCs spent 14.5% of their time providing education and training opportunities, considerably more time than on any other working method (apart from internal operational maintenance tasks).

Figure 12: Percentage of FRC time spent providing training and education, 2009



FRCs either directly provide, or arrange the provision of, education and training opportunities to the community. This normally occurs within three categories of provision:

- Training refers to courses that are linked in some way to employment (developing work-related skills).
- Education is a much broader area, and refers to both formal and informal learning.
- Self-Development refers to courses in personal development, awareness, assertiveness training etc.

During 2009, FRCs have been responsible for:

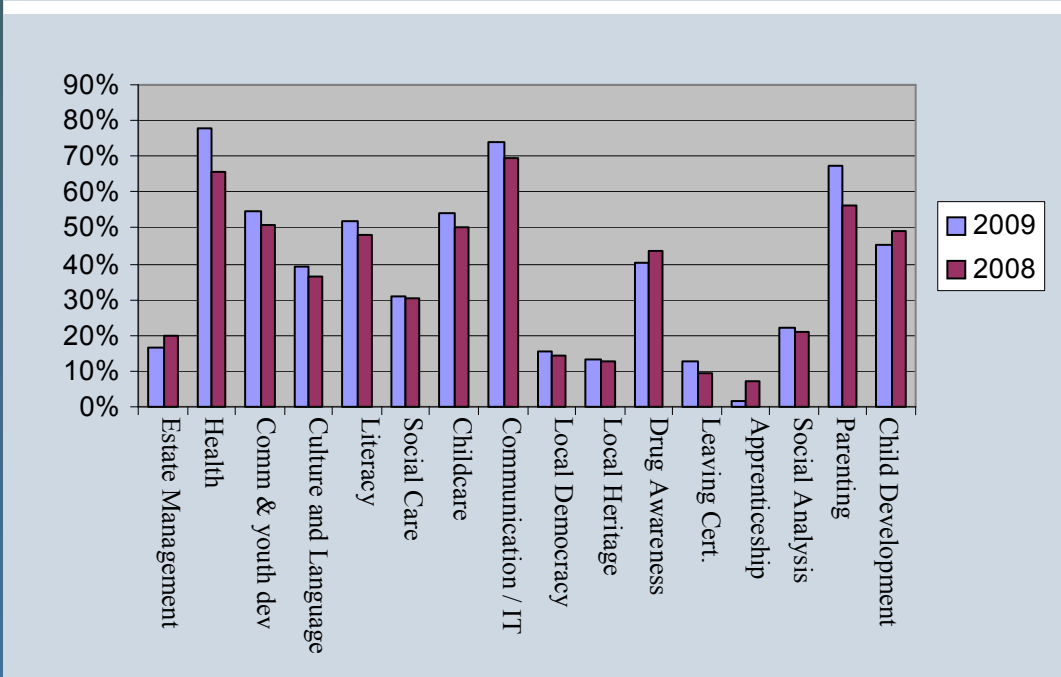
- 13,710 people having completed training courses
- 16,642 people having completed educational courses
- 8,573 people having completed self-development courses.

The provision of training and education opportunities is the principal function of some FRCs. 5,000

people completed educational courses and a further 4,500 people completed vocational training in Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC alone.

Figure 13 indicates that a greater percentage of FRCs were providing education and training opportunities in health, parenting and communications / IT in 2009 than in 2008. On the other hand, fewer FRCs were providing apprenticeships, drug awareness training or training in estate management than previously.

Figure 13: Percentage of FRCs delivering training and education per theme, 2008 and 2009



For many communities, be they in isolated rural areas or in poorly serviced urban areas, the FRC may be the only place where education and training opportunities can be accessed:

“We remain the only locally based training and resource facility in the area that provides high quality education and training within our local community, particularly [for] those individuals who are unemployed or suffer from lack of confidence and low self esteem.”

Dunfanaghy Community & Family Resource Ltd.

“We continue to strive to provide accredited training where possible, as we are an Accredited Centre with FETAC - the only FRC in the North West Region having this status.”

Ballymote Family Resource Centre

In communities where a range of education and training opportunities exist, FRCs ensure that training is targeted to benefit those most in need:

“The FRC makes available its training and education programmes to as many people as possible, while priority is given to those in our target groups. Consultation with other agencies providing education & training ensures that there is no overlap in courses provided.”

Shannon Family Resource Centre

For many of the FRCs target groups, it is the way in which education and training is delivered that makes it accessible:

“Training in the Family Resource Centre setting allows people to access training in a more relaxed and informal environment. Many community people may not have had a positive experience with the formal education system and so shy away from accessing training in such environments.”

Mountview Family Resource Centre

“We can target people who are not targeted by other groups/ agencies. We tailor training around our target groups needs, which means it is more accessible and affordable to people. We respond to community issues as they happen and training can be part of this. Our training has also resulted in the establishment of groups such as Step Forward disability group and a Carers Group.”

Hospital FRC

Impacts associated with these programmes are most evident in terms of personal progression for individual participants:

“Some of the participants on these programs have progressed onto further training and employment (e.g. two lone parents participated on a retail training programme and secured employment, following placement in retail outlets).”

Ballina Family Resource Centre

“Five people have moved on to further education as a result of the Job Club and Adult Learner Fair.”

Mevagh Family Resource Centre

“The one-to-one mentoring of the two young men as part of the ‘Get IT’ programme gave them the guidance to begin their road away from their involvement in anti-social behaviour, and to explore the education options available to them. At the end of this course, they all came away with a FETAC level 4 qualification and a renewed belief that there are possibilities open to them for their future. One of these young men also had a court case during this programme and because of his involvement...did not get a conviction.”

Westport FRC

“One person who completed the Childcare Course has progressed to 3rd Level Education... Two Travellers that were supported in practising for their driver theory tests passed their tests and got their provisional licences.”

Taghmon FRC

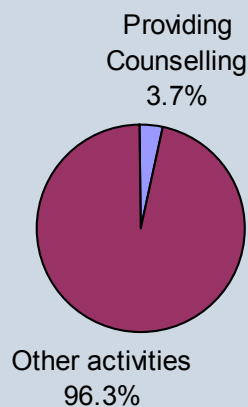
“One of the aims of the centre is to provide education and training to early school leavers or other disadvantaged groups so that they can enter the workforce. Each year 20 participants complete the FÁS Local Training Initiatives programme and 45 persons complete the Back to Education Initiative. Many of those who have completed the programmes have received employment in areas such as office work and retail. Additionally, some participants have gone on to third level and further education.”

Spafield FRC

Providing Counselling Supports

During 2009, FRCs spent 3.7% of their staff time providing counselling supports within local communities and maintaining self-help support groups. This represents a notable increase on the corresponding figure of 3.3% of time committed by FRCs during 2008.

Figure 14: Percentage of FRC time spent delivering counselling supports, 2009



During 2009 over 19,650 individual counselling sessions were delivered within FRCs to 5,389 people. The focus of these counselling sessions were varied: relationship counselling (8,125 sessions); bereavement counselling (3,749 sessions); separation counselling (2,529 sessions) and other (5,253 sessions).

FRCs have recorded that a further 691 names have been entered on waiting lists to access counselling services. This is an increase of 153 names on the 538 that were entered on waiting lists at the

end of 2008.

In addition to the provision of counselling sessions for individuals, FRCs also maintained 439 self help support groups during 2009. These groups comprise largely of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Lone Parent Support Groups.

Central to the work of FRCs in facilitating the personal progression of people in their communities is the provision of informal one-to-one support (or as it is commonly referred to by FRC staff, “cup of tea support”). This refers to welcoming and listening to members of the community who just want a quiet chat in a non-judgemental atmosphere. During 2009, FRCs recorded 13,311 such visits.

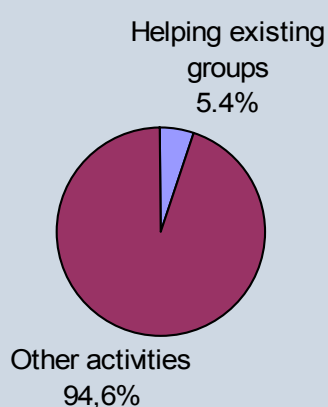
Promoting Self Reliance and Autonomy

In total, FRCs dedicated 8.8% of their time in 2009 to providing help for existing community and voluntary groups, or to setting up groups, networks or initiatives.

Helping existing community and voluntary groups

The help provided to existing community and voluntary groups entailed providing them with assistance to organise their internal organisation, advice and support in tackling development issues and help to access funding opportunities. This accounted for 5.4% of FRC staff time.

Figure 15: Percentage of FRC time spent helping existing community and voluntary groups, 2009



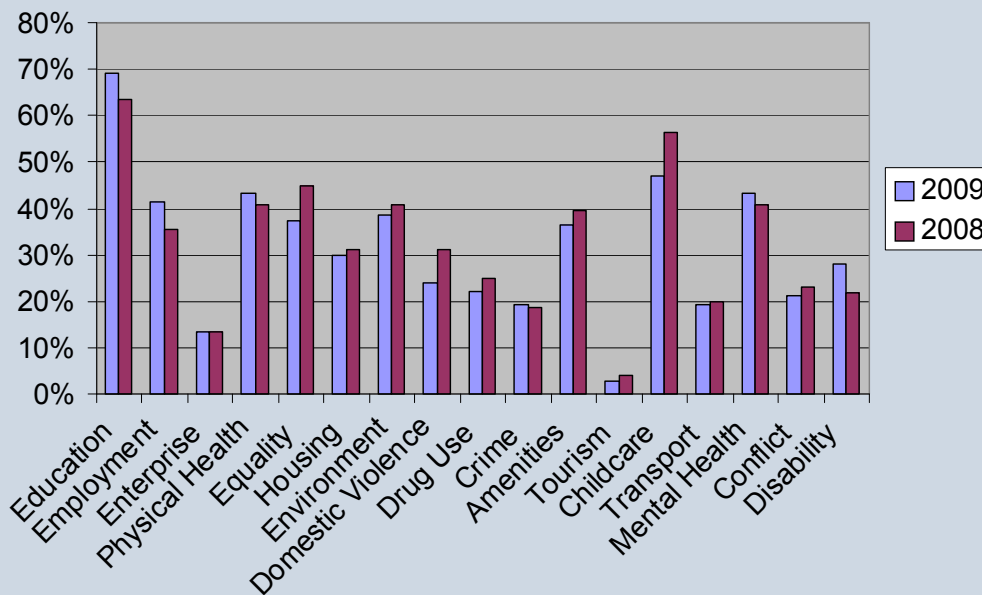
During 2009, almost 1,500 existing community and voluntary groups were supported:

- 702 were helped with accessing funding opportunities.

- 400 were helped in developing their organisational or management structures.
- 364 groups were groups helped in tackling particular development or policy issues.

These figures represent a significant increase on the 1,254 groups that were supported previously. Figure 16 shows that most of the groups assisted were addressing local issues connected with education, childcare, physical or mental health and employment.

Figure 16: Development theme of those existing community and voluntary groups helped by FRCs, 2008 and 2009



In 2009, more FRCs supported groups dealing with education, employment, mental and physical health, disability and crime (marginally) than in 2008. Fewer FRCs helped groups dealing with other issues, most notably childcare and equality. It is possible that fewer childcare groups were seeking help from FRCs during 2009 than in 2008 as childcare funding schemes became more established.

The longer term benefits accruing to existing community and voluntary groups from the assistance provided by FRCs can be categorised into those experienced exclusively by the group and those that relate to the community at large. Many FRCs identified benefits experienced by the existing community and voluntary group itself. These included:

“Access to funding plays a vital role in enabling new groups/initiatives to actually get started. Facilitating a clear focus of work...plays an important role in helping a group to get started.”

Ballyhaunis FRC

“Due to the ongoing support of the Development Worker, the confidence of the Women’s Group is much stronger and they now have the ability to plan and organise their own group activities.”

Arden View Community Family and Resource Centre

“The key impact of helping groups is the increased empowerment of committees to take ownership of their group.”

Forward Steps FRC Ltd.

Some FRCs also noted impacts of this work that affect the broader community:

“There has been a build up of good will and cooperation between existing groups in the community...There is an increase in the sharing of knowledge and information between different community groups. Strengths and resources in the community have been recognised, encouraged and celebrated.”

Southend Family Resource Centre

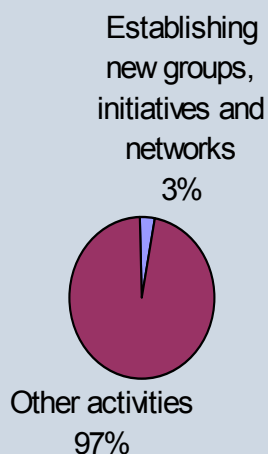
“By helping groups such as the Rosemount Redevelopment Group on an ongoing basis, we have contributed to the committee remaining strong and committed and thus had a part in helping them to achieve their goals in 2009. Rosemount Estate Management Forum was helped by the Resource Centre facilitating a number of environmental programmes in 2009, including the planting of a community garden which has enhanced the area and created a focal point for community spirit.”

Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.

Establishing new groups, networks or initiatives

On top of the help FRCs provided to existing community and voluntary groups, a range of new groups, networks and initiatives was also established with the input of FRCs. In total, 274 new groups, networks or initiatives were established during 2009. This accounted for 3.4% of FRC staff time.

Figure 17: Percentage of FRC time spent establishing new groups, networks and initiatives, 2009



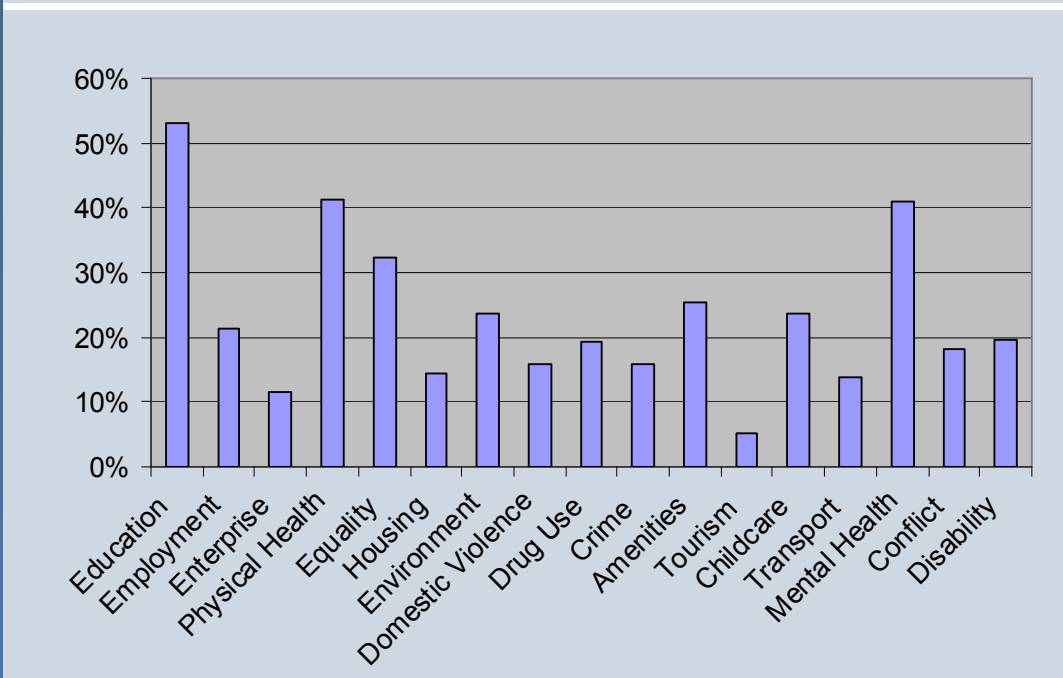
During 2009, the records of 1,252 groups, networks and initiatives assisted by FRCs were updated in the SPEAK FRC system. Of these, FRCs were 'solely responsible' for the establishment of 245, 'mainly responsible' for 512 and 'partly responsible' for the remaining 495.

Of the total 1,252, FRCs have recorded that 65 have stopped their activities, FRCs continue to support 104 and a further 563 have become independent and no longer require any support from FRCs. The status of the remaining 520 groups, networks and initiatives is not clear.

FRCs have recorded that 23,324 people participate in the 667 groups, networks and initiatives for which data is available. Furthermore, these groups, networks and initiatives employ a total of 2,997.5 people (full-time equivalents) and are known to have attracted funding of € 712, 089.

Figure 18 demonstrates that the most frequent development theme addressed by those groups, networks and initiatives established, or partly established, by FRCs are education, physical health and mental health. Tourism and enterprise are the development themes least addressed.

Figure 18: Percentage of groups, networks and initiatives established (or partly established) by FRCs focusing on specific development themes



New groups, networks and initiatives are typically established as a result of a need identified by local community members.

The practices informing the establishment of a new group, network or initiative were outlined by one FRC:

“When establishing new groups we ensure clarity on the purpose of the group and ensure

that the group is led by the needs of its members. We develop a structure at the appropriate time for the group and do not create a dependency”

Le Chéile FRC, Mallow

As well as developing an important focal point for organised activities and services, FRCs see the establishment of new groups, networks and initiatives as being a key working method in involving the most excluded members of their communities, and in combating social isolation:

“We work by working with members of the community to meet [an identified] need, by either establishing a group, a network or an initiative. The empowerment felt by members of the local community through this method is very important. All members of the community were welcome to take part in the process, therefore it is completely socially inclusive.”

Family Life Centre

“This is still the most utilised method that The Centre uses to engage with our target groups. We feel that it gives people the greatest opportunity to identify their issues and work towards dealing with them in a collective and proactive way... By establishing the Quay Community Project Management Committee [the local community] now has a direct role in the planning of their area.”

Westport FRC

“[Groups] provide the opportunity for people simply to make new friends and to develop their own support network so that, through the ups and downs in life, they feel supported. Through the establishment of the groups, this has allowed a wealth of information to be shared among the people in the community.”

Mountview Family Resource Centre

“This encourages members of our community to be more active and this in turn helps them to be more pro-active members of society.”

Shanakill FRC

Community Based Arts Initiatives

Community initiatives established by FRCs involving community arts have been recorded independently of other community based initiatives. During 2009, 44 new community arts initiatives were established, bringing the total number of active community arts initiatives supported by FRCs to 230. This accounted for 1.4% of FRC staff time.

Figure 19: Percentage FRC time spent on Community Arts, 2009



Many FRCs used community arts as a way of involving particular sections of their communities that may have been difficult to access through other developmental approaches. For example:

“We continue to find art, drama and music a very useful tool in working with children and young people. As well as an enjoyable past time, we find engaging with the arts a useful method in helping children and young people in terms of self development and exploring issues that affect their lives, for instance drugs, alcohol, body image, etc.”

Moville and District Family Resource Centre Limited

“We are working with arts as a means of personal development which will continue to be used to develop the participants on the Men’s project and the Youth projects.”

Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd.

In other communities, the level of involvement with community arts initiatives has been widespread:

“Arts and crafts are used in most of the programmes in the centre. It is a useful tool for involving people in a non threatening way that also builds self confidence and self esteem.”

Southend Family Resource Centre

The community arts approach is regarded as a creative and effective way of stimulating thought within a community around a social issue or shared experience:

“Bringing together community...to work through the medium of art to highlight the issue of violence against women.” **Hill Street FRC**

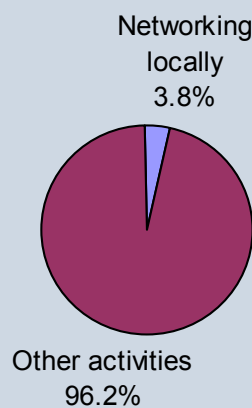
“The transition to the F2 Neighbourhood Centre provided the opportunity to create a set of seven exhibitions comprising photos, artworks and installations throughout the building - including the Cultural Archaeology timeline - in which the various narratives, images and soundscapes related to the experience of regeneration by children, young people and adult residents were displayed to huge effect - both for local audiences, media and the wider public.”

Fatima Groups United FRC

Building Partnerships, Networking Locally and Policy related work

FRCs also contribute to development initiatives within communities, where a collective response is required from community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders. This work includes attendance at meetings, committee membership or other structured involvement in community fora and committees.

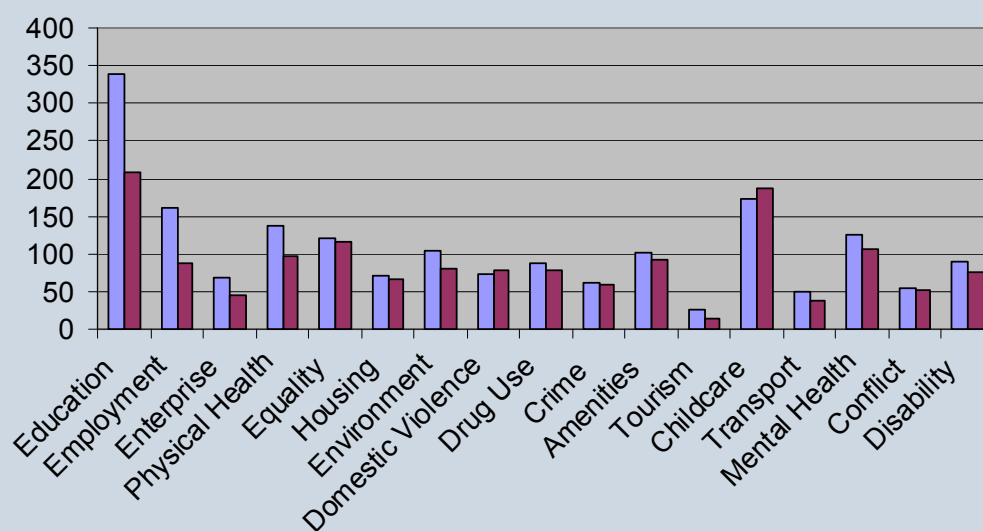
Figure 20: Percentage of FRC time spent networking locally, 2009



During 2009, FRC staff spent 3.8% of their time contributing to local networks. This represents a slight decrease on the commitment FRCs made to networking locally in 2008, 4.1%, and 2007, 5%.

Figure 21, overleaf, indicates the total number of locally-based networks and committees in which FRCs were involved during 2009 and 2008. Figure 21 clearly demonstrates that while networking activity has remained steady across most developmental issues, the level of networking associated with education, employment and (to a lesser degree, enterprise) has increased markedly.

Figure 21: Number of locally based networks and committees in which FRCs were involved, by issue, 2008 and 2009



Notwithstanding the fact that FRCs invested less time in networking locally during 2009 than in previous years, FRCs continue to associate networking with positive impacts in relation to building consensus and cohesion amongst different development organisations and service providers at community level:

“Networking enables sharing of information, skills and resources in a co-ordinated way. It can multiply the effect that we, as an organisation, can have in the community. The effect is that resources are used to their full potential and thus have a greater impact on the community.”

St Kevin’s FRC

“[Networking results in] an increase in information concerning the issues of the local community. Also, it is important to have a knowledge of what other local groups are doing so that we can co-operate and share resources and never unnecessarily duplicate our efforts.”

Quarryvale Community Resource Group

A number of FRCs have provided examples of how networking locally can inform a re-direction of the work they have been undertaking:

“The [FRC Coordinator’s] membership of the board of Southside Partnership keeps the project linked into issues which in turn can influence the work of the project at a local level.”

Balally Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Many FRCs consider their unique position - as a development organisation that is located within a local community and managed by that community – enables them to bring the true voice of local

communities to the attention of mainstream service providers, through networking and participation in inter-agency committees. For example:

“Project spent some time networking locally with different agencies...to ensure that the community would be included in all relevant issues and policy making relating to education, employment and various other issues.”

Teach Oscail

While FRCs recognise and appreciate the value of networking locally, the time involved can act as a barrier to continued or sustained participation:

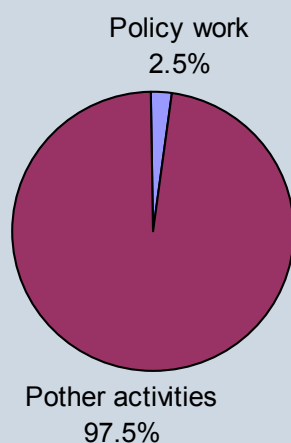
“Local networking is of high value to the organisation. However, due to small staffing levels (1 full time and 2 part time workers) it is not always possible to find the required time to engage in networking.”

Shannow Family Resource Centre

Policy Work

In 2009, FRCs committed 2.5% of their total time to policy-linked work – contributing to an understanding of the impact of policy decisions upon disadvantaged communities and playing a role in influencing the decision making process as it relates to development and social inclusion work.

Figure 22: Percentage of FRC time spent on policy work, 2009



An indication of the development issues which are of most concern to FRCs is provided in Figure 23 overleaf.

Figure 23: Number of seminars, networks and publications in relation to specific development themes, 2009

Key Issue	Seminars, Conferences	Regional / Nat Networks	Publications / Research, etc.
Childcare	184	123	48
Equality	113	196	16
Employment	110	71	32
Drug Use	94	64	37
Domestic Violence	75	83	27
Mental Health	96	60	19
Physical Health	83	35	35
Disability	54	35	31
Environment	49	27	29
Amenities	52	23	18
Housing	35	20	17
Enterprise	39	18	11
Conflict	29	20	13
Transport	25	17	6
Total	1,333	997	437

The data presented here demonstrates the importance of childcare, equality issues and employment in relation to FRCs' overall involvement in policy work. These issues, together with drug use and domestic violence, also account for the most significant outputs from FRCs in terms of publications and research undertaken in the policy field.

There was no significant shift in the number of FRC outputs associated with policy work between 2008 and 2009. However, 2009 did see an increase of 4% in the number of publications and research undertaken by FRCs when compared with the corresponding 2008 output.

Positive impacts, as a result of this work, were reported in relation to gathering information about how changes in national policy affect service delivery at local level and how FRCs can adapt to and influence such changes:

“A seminar was organised by [the Regional Support Agency] on how FRCs could support the unemployed. This helped each project to see what supports are available to the unemployed by mainstream agencies and what clear, niche role that FRCs could play.”

Westport FRC

“The Youth Network, working in conjunction with the HSE West, produced a Child Protection Policy and Procedures handbook for use within all 12 Family Resource Centres in the

West Region.”

Loughrea FRC

Other impacts relate to FRCs’ ability to influence policy development through contributing to decision making from a position informed by working at ground level. For example:

“A major piece of work in the past year was the process of inputting to policy at a national level. A local meeting was arranged for older people and agencies to make a submission to the *National Positive Ageing Strategy*.”

St. Munchin’s Family Resource Centre

“Our involvement in this area of policy work has realised practical results...the introduction of Disability and Unemployment Programmes has emerged from our policy work, involving the Department of Social and Family Affairs”

Breffni Community Development Co. Ltd.

It should be noted that despite the best efforts of FRCs, not all of their attempts to influence policy generated immediate impacts. For example:

“A number of meetings were held with the research officer of the RSA and other Cork and County FRCs to put together a submission to the VEC regarding changes in their approach to community education. No feedback has yet been received from the VEC regarding this.”

Dunmanway FRC

During 2009, FRCs committed considerable time and effort to campaigning against the implementation of recommendations in the *Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes* for the discontinuation of the Family Support Agency and the fragmentation of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. This was referred to by many FRCs during 2009. This work is regarded as having had a very positive impact:

“In 2009 considerable time was spent dealing with the recommendations of the McCarthy Report regarding the FRC Programme. The direct impact of this within our community is that it has increased the level of service users [accessing our FRC].”

Breffni Community Dev. Co. Ltd.

“During the course of work carried out with the local politicians with regard to the national campaign of the FRC programme, we had meetings with the Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan, TD, to highlight the work of the FRC programme here in Blanchardstown and nationally. The FRC programme survived threats to it this year as a result of a very successful campaign.”

Mountview Family Resource Centre

What has made the Achievements of FRCs possible?

The successes achieved by FRCs during 2009 have been made possible through a continuing adherence to community development principles and practices. The work of volunteers and staff has been built upon inclusive, participative and trusting working relationships with local communities. The majority of FRCs identified the dedication and capacity of staff and volunteers as the main factor leading to the success of FRCs.

In addition, whereas many FRCs noted a lack of resources as a factor hindering their progress (below), those FRCs that have accessed additional staff, funding sources or premises tended to record this as a factor contributing to their successes.

FRCs also noted other factors that helped them undertake their work. The principal factors that aided FRCs to implement their work plans are discussed here.

The continued availability of core funding and leveraged funding:

“Core funding and small grants and awards provided to the centre allowed us to provide running costs for groups and also allowed us to be in a position to access information and provide other services to our clients.”

Listowel Family Resource Centre

“Start up grant from the FSA was very beneficial in enabling the FRC to set up the centre and provide an open, friendly environment for people to meet and use facilities.”

Claremorris FRC

“The availability of workers through the CE Scheme and the Rural Social Scheme.”

Forward Steps FRC Ltd.

“Continued access to funding allowed us to continue our computer classes during the year. A jobs club and first aid training were also provided along with personal development opportunities for African men and social policy training for community activists.”

Ballyhaunis FRC

With the passing of time, FRCs have become more established within their communities and more highly regarded by their working partners:

“We are more established and play an active role in local decision making. Our links with individuals and different groups have strengthened.”

Three Drives FRC

“The project is now well established in the community and relationships have now developed with other agencies with similar issues and needs. The community's capacity to identify their own needs and issues is also reflected in the participation of the project on local networks and agencies. The Project acts in many ways as an advocate of the issues experienced.”

Baginbally Family Resource Centre Ltd.

“The continued establishment of links with other local organisations and service providers [has helped us in our work].”

Ballina Family Resource Centre

The role of Regional Support Agencies was noted for its contribution towards maintaining a community development focus to the work of FRCs and also for facilitating collective responses among FRCs:

“Involvement with the Regional Support Agency has sharpened our community development focus.”

Family Life Centre

“The West [Region] has a number of very active regional networks. These are the Lone Parents' Network, the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) Network, the Youth Network, the Community Response to Domestic Violence Network and the Administrators' Network... These networks are extremely effective fora for developing policies, raising awareness, highlighting issues, sharing information, ideas and resources and engaging in consultation. All of the networks have, to date, been facilitated by the Regional Support Agency.”

Loughrea FRC

Specialist Support Agencies within the programme were also identified as an enabling resource:

“We do engage in arts activities, but only as identified by each group. We have increased our engagement in arts this year...We are in contact with Blue Drum specialist support agency in this regard...we will be grateful for more support around this area.”

Mohill Family Support Centre Ltd.

What Barriers are FRCs facing in their work?

The most significant barrier to progress cited by FRCs during 2009 related to the need for additional resources including additional staff, additional funding and premises.

“We did not get a Development Worker and this was a major blow to the FRC, as we submitted our 3-year plan on the basis that we would get the additional worker. Outreach work was limited or cancelled and this impacted on supports offered to the wider community.”

Ballymote Family Resource Centre

“The lack of a development worker or community worker has really hindered the organisation in developing more effective responses to the requests from other groups and organisations.”

St Kevin's FRC

“The DFRC is a small premises and this hinders us in providing proper facilities such as meeting room space. This also restricts us from holding our courses/programmes in the centre due to the size of the rooms. For this reason, we limit our courses to a maximum of 10 and for larger numbers we rent a facility. This adds to the cost of the course and may hinder people from participating.”

Donegal Family Resource Centre Ltd.

“Lack of LEADER funding was a major disadvantage to the project, particularly when we moved premises. Our situation was made more difficult with the onset of the recession.”

Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd.

In addition, some FRCs identified the need for specific training to be undertaken in advance of particular pieces of work being undertaken:

“Sometimes there is a lack of understanding on how to involve community arts within the process of community development and what role it would play.”

Westport FRC

This barrier is often compounded by a lack of access to external expertise:

“The availability of suitably qualified facilitators, and those able and willing to commit their time on a voluntary basis, is hindering our progress.”

Dunfanaghy Community & Family Resource Ltd.

It was also noted by some FRCs that the lack of adequate supporting services can hinder their ca-

capacity to facilitate initiatives to tackle identified needs. For example:

“Childcare is one of the biggest hindrances as it often prevents the groups [with which we are working] from meeting and becoming involved in capacity building, training and support.”

Arden View Community & Family Resource Centre

FRCs are committed to working with, and on behalf of, those sections of the community that are most disadvantaged. However, in some areas, the need for this work is not recognised or prioritised by other service providers or development organisations.

“There are no visible signs of networks in this community which relate to social inclusion and poverty. Greystones is perceived to be an affluent area - although the experience of the two [target groups we work with] is somewhat different.”

Greystones Peoples Project

Appendix 1: List of Family Resources Centres

Aonad Resource Centre
Arden View Community & Family Resource Centre
Artane Coolock Resource & Development Centre
Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Balally Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Baldoyle Family Resource Centre
Ballina Family Resource Centre
Ballyboden Family Resource Centre
Ballyfermot Family Resource Centre
Ballyhaunis FRC
Ballymote Family Resource Centre
Ballyogan Family Resource Centre
Ballyspillane FRC
Bandon FSG
Breffni Community Dev. Co. Ltd.
Bridgeways FRC
Buds FRC
Cairdeas Kilmovee FRC
Cara House FRC
Cara Phort Family Resource Centre
Castlebar Le Chéile FRC
Castlemaine Family Resource Centre
Cherry Orchard FRC Ltd.
Clann Resource Centre
Clara Community & Family Support Centre Ltd.
Claremorris FRC
Clones FRC
Cobh Family Resource Centre Ltd.
CONNECT Family Resource Centre
Croom Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Curragh Pride FRC
Donegal Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Downstrands Family Resource Centre
Droichead Family Resource Centre
Droichead na Daoine
Drop in Well FRC
Duagh Family Centre

Dunfanaghy Community & Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Dunmanway FRC
Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Ennistymon Family Resource Centre Ltd.
FACT Ballincollig Family Resource Centre
Family Life Centre
Fatima Groups United
FOCUS Family Resource Centre
Forward Steps FRC Ltd.
Gort Family Resource Centre
Greystones Peoples Project
Hill Street FRC
Hillview Community Resource Centre Ltd.
Hospital Family Resource Centre
Kells People's Resource Centre
Kerryhead/Ballyheigue Family Resource Centre
Killaloe/Ballina FRC
Killinarden Family Resource Centre
Killorglin Family Resource Centre
Kilrush Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Knockmay Family Resource Centre
Le Chéile FRC Mallow
Listowel Family Resource Centre
Loughrea Family Resource Centre
Lus na Greine FRC
Mevagh Family Resource Centre
Millennium FRC
Middleton Community Forum Ltd.
Mohill Family Support Centre Ltd.
Monsignor Mc Carthy Family Resource Centre
Mountview Resource Centre
Moville and District Family Resource Centre Limited
Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC
Newbridge FRC
Newpark Close FRC
Quarryvale Community Resource Group
Raheen Community Development Group Ltd.
Raphoe Family Resource Centre
Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.

School St. FRC
Shanakill FRC
Shannon Family Resource Centre Ltd.
Shannow Family Resource Centre
Sligo FRC
Solas Resource Centre
South West Kerry Family Resource Centre
Southend Family Resource Centre
Southill FRC
Spafield FRC
St Johnston & Carrigans FRC
St Kevin's FRC
St. Andrew's Resource Centre
St. Brigid's Family and Resource Centre
St. Brigid's Community Centre
St. Canice's Community Action Ltd.
St. Matthews Family Centre
St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre
Tacú Resource Centre
Taghmon FRC
Teach Oscail Resource Project Ltd.
The Caha Centre
The Forge FRC
Three Drives FRC
Trim Family Resource Centre
Tubbercurry FRC Co. Ltd.
Westport FRC

Appendix 2: Target Groups

Name	Description
Women	Adult Women.
Children	Persons under 12 years of age.
Young Person	Persons below 25 years of age.
Unemployed	Unemployed persons. May also refer to underemployed persons, i.e. part-time or seasonal workers.
Older Person	People over 50 years of age.
Lone Parent	Lone parents.
Men	Adult Men.
Disability	Persons with a disability. This disability can be either physical or mental.
Travellers	Members of the Travelling Community.
Farmers	Farmers and their families.
Other Ethnic Groups	Members of ethnic minority groups (excluding Travellers), including refugees and asylum seekers.
Drug Users	Drug users and their families. This also refers to addiction more generally, including alcohol addiction.
Tenants and Residents	Groups of Tenants and Residents, being worked with as a group.
Family Units	A family (consisting of more than one person) which is being worked with as a single unit.
Gay and Lesbian	Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people.

Appendix Three: Development themes and issues

Name	Description
Education	Education, including formal and non-formal education. It also refers to personal development needs
Employment	Employment, unemployment and underemployment
Enterprise	Enterprise development, including the social economy and agriculture
Physical Health	Healthcare, including healthcare for elderly persons and people with special needs
Equality	Promoting equality and inclusion. Challenging discrimination and prejudice based on the nine grounds listed in Ireland's equality legislation.
Housing	Housing and accommodation
Environment	The environment, whether it be built or natural
Domestic Violence	Domestic Violence and its impact on women, children, men and families
Drug Use	Drug Use, Drug Users and their families, and addiction more generally, including alcohol addiction
Crime	Crime and criminality and Justice Issues
Amenities	Amenities and facilities
Tourism	Tourism and Tourist industry development
Childcare	Childcare issues
Transport	Transport
Mental Health	Mental Health issues
Conflict	Conflict resolution
Disability	Physical, sensory or learning disabilities

Abbreviations

FRC	Family Resource Centre
FSA	Family Support Agency
RSA	Regional Support Agency
FCSRCP	Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme
SPEAK	Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge-networking
LA	Local Authority
EU	European Union
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
HSE	Health Service Executive
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service
CIS	Citizens' Information Service
CDB	County Development Board
CCC	County Childcare Committee
DTF	Drugs Task Force
CEB	County Enterprise Board
ADM	Area Development Management (now called Pobal)
DJELR	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
CRAG	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (new Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs formed in 2010)
DSFA	Department of Social and Family Affairs (new Department of Social Protection formed in 2010)

**Compiled by West Training & Development Ltd.
using the 2009 SPEAK FRC National Database.**

**All data is intended to be accurate and
up-to-date at time of publication.**

**SPEAK FRC used under license form SPEAK
Consulting Ltd.**

Family Support Agency

**The Family Support Agency
St. Stephens Green House
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin 2**

Phone: (01) 611 4100

Fax: (01) 676 0824

Email: familysupportagency@welfare.ie

Website: www.fsa.ie

**An Ghníomhaireacht Um Thacaíocht Teaglaigh
Teach Fhaiche Stiabhna
Ardán an Iarla
Baile Átha Cliath**

