

Table of Contents

Foreword		i
Executive Summary		iii
1	Introduction to the work of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme	1
2	Methodology	8
3	FRC Resources: Funding, Staff and Volunteers	12
4	Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities	19
5	Establishing & Coordinating a Community Response to Local Needs	25
6	Helping Existing Community and Voluntary Groups	48
7	Providing Education and Training Opportunities	56
8	Providing Information and Advice	63
9	Hosting Counselling Services	70
10	Providing Front-of-house Administrative Supports	77
11	Contributing to Policy Work	84
Appendix One	Map of Distribution of Family Resource Centres	93
Appendix Two	List of Family Resource Centres (indicating newly-established and well-established FRCs)	94
Appendix Three	List of SPEAK User Resources	98
Appendix Four	List of SPEAK FRC Target Groups	99
Bibliography		100
Abbreviations		102

Foreword

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.

An evaluation of the work of these FRCs was undertaken by Kelleher and Kelleher in 1997. The key recommendation of this 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.

In line with these recommendations, the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme was established to provide local communities with the financial assistance required to staff and equip local Family Resource Centres. There are now 107 communities supported through the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme; the last of these communities is currently completing its pre-development training schedule and will open a Family Resource Centre in 2011.

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

Figure 1 (in Appendix One) depicts the distribution of Family Resource Centres across Ireland. A list of Family Resource Centres is provided in Appendix Two.

The data included in this report is informed by the SPEAK FRC system (see Section 2). A major upgrade of the SPEAK FRC system was initiated in 2010 and is nearing completion. The new system, which has been piloted with a number of FRCs, will be available online. In 2011, the Family Support Agency developed and adopted a *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme*. One of the key features of the framework is the

alignment of the programme with the seven outcomes identified within the *Agenda for Children's Services*. These outcomes, whilst developed in the context of the National Children's Strategy, are equally relevant to families and communities and reflect well the work of the FRCs. The new SPEAK FRC system aims to link the data collected from FRCs to these outcomes.

The Family Support Agency wishes to thank all FRCs for participating in the SPEAK FRC process during 2010. Thanks are also extended to members of the SPEAK FRC Working Group, West Training & Development Ltd., Framework and the FRCs that participated in the pilot testing of the new SPEAK FRC 3 system.

Executive Summary

This report is informed by information recorded in the SPEAK FRC (Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge Networking) system relating to the work of 106 Family Resource Centres (FRCs) during 2010. Data entered into the SPEAK system indicates that the resources applied by FRCs during this period were financed through a variety of funding sources. In terms of human resources, personnel consisted of a professional staff body supplemented by a voluntary staff team. The work of all staff and volunteers was managed and directed at FRC level by Voluntary Boards of Directors.

FRC Resources: Funding, Staff and Volunteers

- Core funding granted by the Family Support Agency to the 106 FRCs that contributed to the national programme database in 2010 amounted to €14.6 million, an average of €138,164 per FRC.
- FRCs attracted a further €22 million from other funding sources bringing the total operating budget of all FRCs to €36.7 million.
- All FRCs have 'core' staff, funded by the Family Support Agency through the FRC's core funding allocation. In 2010, this core staff comprised 318 people filling 256 full-time equivalent positions.
- There is a considerable gender differential within FRC core-funded staff. Fewer than 13% of core-funded staff are men.
- Alongside core-funded staff, a large proportion of FRCs employ staff funded through other sources. Combined, the 106 FRCs employ a staff body of 1,117 people in 703 fulltime equivalent positions.
- During 2010, local volunteers worked in various capacities within FRCs; this contribution is distinct from that made by Voluntary Boards of Directors. In total, 365 full-time equivalent positions were filled by 2,783 local volunteers.

Outputs and self-identified impacts of the work of FRCs are categorised within the SPEAK FRC system according to the working method through which they were delivered. Those working methods differentiated within SPEAK FRC include developing capacity and leadership within communities; establishing and coordinating

a community response to local needs; helping existing community and voluntary groups; providing education and training opportunities; providing information and advice; hosting counselling services; providing front-of-house administrative services; contributing to policy work.

Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities

In seeking to deliver greater family well-being, FRCs adopt a community development approach to their work that is characterised by a participative style that is empowering of local communities.

- In 2010, a total of 1,109 people served as Voluntary Directors within FRCs. Collectively, they contributed more than 44,857 voluntary hours fulfilling the duties associated with this role. This equates to a contribution of 1,282 working weeks.
- The target groups (see Appendix Four for list) most likely to be represented on Voluntary Boards of Directors during 2010 were Women and Older People. Those target groups least likely to be represented on Voluntary Boards of Directors were Gay and Lesbian people, Drug Users and Travellers.

Establishing and Coordinating a Community Response to Local Needs

FRCs seek to facilitate local individuals and family members to identify their own needs and to work collectively to address these needs.

- During 2010, 321 new community groups and initiatives were formed with the involvement of FRCs. This represents a significant increase on the 274 new community groups and initiatives that were founded during 2009.
- Alongside Community Arts Groups, Youth Groups and Older People's Groups were most frequently founded by FRCs during 2010. The number of Intercultural Groups (15) established during 2010 is considerably higher than in previous years.

- Combined, the community groups and initiatives founded by FRCs during 2010 attracted €2,475,863 in additional funding and created 108 job opportunities. The seven childcare initiatives formed by FRCs during 2010 accounted for €1,784,964 of this funding and 55 of these jobs.
- Twenty four percent of new community groups and initiatives established during 2010 address the five top priorities for FRC Volunteer Directors. These priorities are Employment, Mental Health, Childcare, Drugs and Physical Health.

Helping Existing Community and Voluntary Groups

FRCs contribute to the self-reliance and autonomy of existing community and voluntary groups and the challenges being faced by local families. These groups were not initiated by FRCs.

- During 2010, over 1,600 existing community and voluntary groups were supported by their local FRCs.
- The main areas of support provided related to accessing funding, organisational development or addressing specific policy issues.

Providing Education and Training Opportunities

FRCs either directly provide, or arrange for the provision of, a range of education and training opportunities for local individuals, families and communities.

- During 2010, FRCs have been responsible, often in conjunction with other service providers, for significant outputs in relation to training and education:
 - 14,331 people completed education courses
 - 10,082 people completed training courses
 - 6,044 people completed self development courses.

- Those target groups most likely to participate in courses delivered through FRCs are Women and Older People. The target groups least likely to be represented on courses delivered through FRCs are Gay and Lesbian people, Drug Users and Farmers.

Providing Information and Advice

FRCs provide access to information at local level. FRCs also act as a focal point for onward referrals to mainstream service providers.

- In total, FRC staff and volunteers directly provided 136,675 people with information or advice during 2010. A further 56,030 people were referred onward to other organisations or services.

Hosting Counselling Services

FRCs offer access to affordable, supportive and non-judgemental professional counselling services within local communities.

- Over 20,000 professional counselling sessions were delivered during the year. This figure breaks down into:
 - 9,337 sessions concerning 'Relationship'
 - 3,849 sessions concerning 'Bereavement'
 - 3,014 sessions concerning 'Separation'
 - 4,531 sessions concerning 'other' topics.
- There are 75 FRCs that hosted counselling services during 2010. On average, each was responsible for 276 sessions during 2010.
- Alongside those who accessed professional counselling services through an FRC, a further 14,263 people benefited from informal one-to-one support.

Providing Front-of-house Administrative Supports

FRCs act as a central hub for family and community activity where resources such as administrative supports and meeting rooms are made available.

- During 2010, FRCs received 295,395 visits by individuals to use front-of-house administrative supports (including computers, phones, photocopiers, etc.). This figure equates to an average of just over 11 visits being made each working day to each of the 106 participating FRCs.
- A further 33,395 visits were made by community groups to use these facilities. This is broadly in line with the 33,676 visits made during 2009. This figure equates to an average of 1.25 visits being made each working day to each of the 106 participating FRCs.
- FRC meeting rooms / premises were used a further 21,815 times by community groups and mainstream service providers. This is a significant increase on the 19,725 uses recorded during 2009.
- FRCs in Dublin received an average of 50% more visits from individuals accessing front-of-house administrative supports than did those FRCs located outside of Dublin.
- FRC staff and volunteers suggest that mainstream service providers benefit greatly from the availability of meeting space / clinic space locally.

Contributing to Policy Work

FRCs seek to build partnerships and to jointly contribute to the coordination and delivery of community based services and family supports. FRCs also seek to make the benefit of their learning and experience available to those involved in the decision making processes as it relates to family support and community development.

- During 2010, FRCs contributed to 1,493 seminars or conferences.
- FRCs contributed to 1,105 regional or national networking events during 2010.

Section 1 An Introduction to the work of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

What do Family Resource Centres do?

Family Resource Centres aim to ‘combat disadvantage and improve the function of the family unit.’ (Family Support Agency 2011).

Given that each community is unique, each FRC has prioritised a distinct programme of work aimed at supporting families within its own catchment area based on needs on issues identified by families and communities. Notwithstanding the bespoke nature of each FRC’s workplan, a common approach to how the work is undertaken is shared by all 106 centres. This approach is developmental in nature; it relies on the involvement of local communities in identifying challenges faced by families and seeks to provide families with the skills and resources required to meet these challenges.

This community development approach is reflected in the organisational structure of FRCs wherein local people who are most likely to benefit from the FRC’s work are tasked with directing and managing each centre. With one exception, all Family Resource Centres are legally constituted as companies limited by guarantee with no share capital. A stipulation in the legal contract entered into by the Family Support Agency and each FRC ensures that the Board of Directors in each FRC is ‘predominantly comprised of the community of intended beneficiaries...consist[ing] of people that have first hand experience of poverty and disadvantage in their own lives’ (Family Support Agency 2011, n.p.). Two Regional Support Agencies provide the training and supports required to enable local community representatives fulfil the role of company director and employer.

As mentioned, each FRC workplan is unique. However, many do employ similar methods. The most common of these are:

- Practical assistance to individuals, families and community groups such as access to information technology, office equipment and administrative supports
- Provision of information and advice at local level
- Provision of counselling and support to individuals and families
- Delivery of education courses and training opportunities
- Practical assistance to existing community groups such as help with organisational structures, assistance to access funding or advice on how to address specific social issues
- The establishment and maintenance of new community groups to meet local needs and to deliver services at local level
- The direct provision of local family support services (for example, childcare facilities, after-school clubs, homework clubs, etc.)
- The direct provision of broader community services and development initiatives (for example, jobs clubs, women's groups, residents associations, etc.)
- The support of personal and group development through the use of community arts
- Bridging the gap between mainstream service providers and local communities
- Building partnerships between other voluntary and statutory agencies operating in each locality.

When compiling the *Agenda for Children's Services* (2007) the Office of the Minister for Children adopted the Hardiker Model as a means of conceptualising family support and categorising organisations involved in family support work. The Hardiker Model consists of four levels that describe family support in terms of different levels of need and appropriate intervention.

Level One: Base Population

The majority of children and families whose needs are being met. They utilise universal services and community resources as required.

Level Two: Children with Additional Needs

Vulnerable children and their families, who require additional support to promote social inclusion, to reduce levels of vulnerability within the family and/or to minimise risk-taking behaviours.

Level Three: Children in Need

Children with complex needs that may be chronic and enduring and whose health (physical & emotional) and development may be significantly impaired without the provision of services. This may include some children who are in need of safeguarding. Children with a disability are also children in need.

Level Four: Children with Complex and/or Acute Needs

Children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm without the provision of services. This includes children who are looked after; those at risk of being looked after and those who are in need of rehabilitation from a care or custodial setting; children with critical and/or high risk needs; children in need of safeguarding and children with complex and enduring needs.

(Source: Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland n.d., p5)

Using this model, the work undertaken by Family Resource Centres applies, for the most part, to levels one and two.

A Community Development Approach to the Provision of Family Support

The critical importance of delivering support to children within the context of family and community was recognised in the Office for the Minister of Children's *The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* (2007). In it, the [then] Minister of State for Children states that 'an important aspect of this policy document...is the emphasis placed on the role of families and communities in the lives of our children. Too often in the past, services were provided to our children and young people in isolation from their families and communities. This was, and is, to the detriment of all concerned. The inclusion of families, extended families and local communities, where possible, in services for children goes a long way to ensuring that these services are actually responding to the needs of the child and ensures that they continue to be effective in the long term, even when direct intervention from State or voluntary agencies has ceased' (p. v).

Acknowledging the critical importance of working at the level of individuals, families and communities is central to the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme.

Family Support has been defined as 'both a style of work and a set of activities; which reinforce positive informal social networks through integrated programmes; combining statutory, voluntary, community and private services, primarily focused on early intervention across a range of levels and needs with the aim of promoting and protecting the health, wellbeing and rights of all children, young people and their families in their own homes and communities, with particular attention to those who are vulnerable or at risk' (Dolan, Canavan and Pinkerton 2004, n.p.).

Accepting this definition leads us to consider that a number of characteristics are central to the notion of 'family support'. Firstly, that family support comprises both task (a set of activities) and process (a style of work). Secondly, that family support programmes can be informed by a multi-sectoral approach. Thirdly, that family support programmes aim to strengthen the social networks of children and parents through supporting their families and communities. Finally, that specific care is taken to focus on those who are vulnerable or at risk.

Further recognition of the need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to supporting families was provided by the report of the Commission on the Family, which advocated a model of family support that is preventative in nature, based on community development principles with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities. 'It is the Commission's view that the approach to family support manifested by the Family and Community Services Resource Centres which is empowering of individuals, builds on family strengths, enhances self esteem and engenders a sense of being able to influence events in one's life, has significant potential as a primary preventive strategy for all families facing the ordinary challenges of day-to-day living, and has a particular relevance in communities that are coping in a stressful environment.' (Commission on the Family 1998, p.16)

The *Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* (2007, p.12) draws together the various types of outcomes found in contemporary children's policy and presents them as a single list of seven items. The seven National Service Outcomes for Children in Ireland are:

- healthy, both physically and mentally
- supported in active learning
- safe from accidental and intentional harm
- economically secure
- secure in the immediate and wider physical environment
- part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
- included and participating in society.

In its *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011), the Family Support Agency adopted these seven National Service Outcomes – as they relate to children and their families – as programme objectives of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. Reference is made to how these objectives are being achieved in each section of this report.

A set of ten practice principles (p.35) are also outlined in the *Agenda for Children's Services* to identify a shared style of working for all organisations contributing to the achievement of the seven national service outcomes:

- Working in partnership with children, families, professionals and communities
- Needs-led and striving for the minimum intervention required
- Clear focus on the wishes, feelings, safety and well-being of children
- Reflects a strengths-based/resilience perspective
- Strengthens informal support networks
- Accessible and flexible, incorporating both child protection and out-of-home care. Facilitates self-referral and multi-access referral paths
- Involves service users and front-line providers in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services
- Promotes social inclusion, addressing issues of ethnicity, disability and rural/urban communities
- Measures of success are routinely built into provision so as to facilitate evaluation.

These practice principles make clear the strength of having a community development approach to family support work. Community development is ‘... a developmental activity composed of both a task and a process. The task is the achievement of social change linked to equality and social justice, and the process is the application of the principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and coordinated way’ (Pobal 1999 cited in Pobal 2011, p13). Bringing a community development approach to family support ensures that a number of these practice principles are adhered to (i.e., that work is undertaken in partnership with children, families, professionals and communities; includes a clear focus on the wishes of children; strengthens informal support networks; involves service users and frontline providers in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services; promotes social inclusion, addressing issues of ethnicity, disability and rural/urban communities). In the absence of a community development approach it is difficult to see how these principles could be complied with.

Recent years have seen major changes to how community development programmes are structured nationally. In late 2008, the [then] Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs announced the integration of Ireland’s two largest community development programmes - the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) and the Community Development Programme (CDP) – to form the Local

and Community Development Programme (LCDP). The comparatively large geographical areas covered by organisations delivering the LCDP, combined with the dismantling of local representative structures within these organisations, has reaffirmed the importance of Family Resource Centres as locally based organisations wherein responsibility for the planning, implementation and review of all work undertaken lies primarily with intended beneficiaries.

Section 2 Methodology

All data contained in this report is taken from the SPEAK FRC 2010 Programme Database.

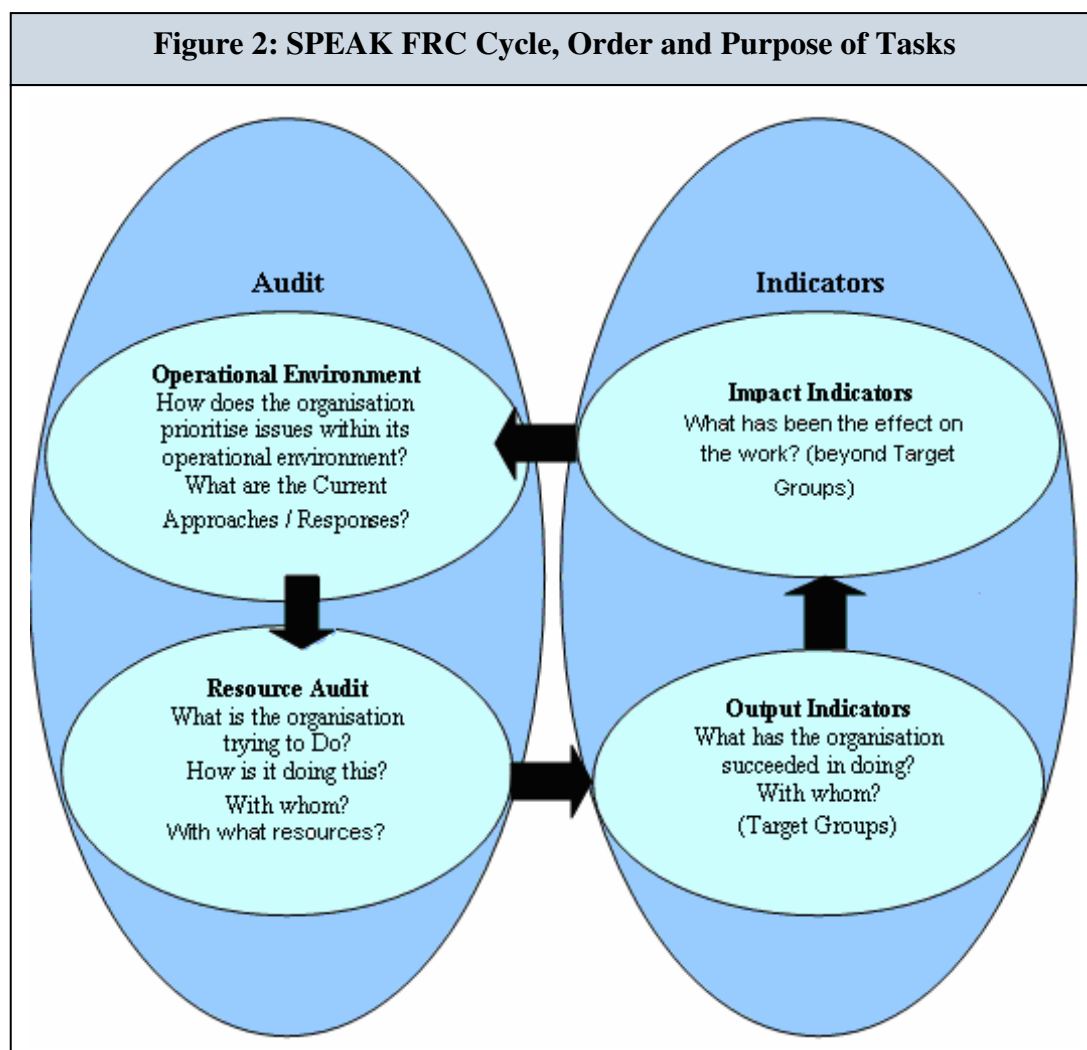
The self evaluation framework underpinning SPEAK (Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge Networking) is designed for application within organisations where the key resource input is people, their time and skills, and the key outputs and outcomes are not profit motivated.

SPEAK FRC is implemented through a software package which is installed in each Family Resource Centre (FRC). The software is accompanied by participatory training and support workshops where staff and volunteers receive training in data input; reporting mechanisms and the manipulation and aggregation of data. A list of written SPEAK FRC User Resources that have been developed is presented in Appendix Three. A technical support service is also available via telephone and email.

The SPEAK FRC software interface has four sections. Each is designed to mimic one of the areas in Figure 2 to create a cyclical self evaluation process. The first part of the cycle requires FRCs to compile an overview of the community within which they are working. Attention is then focused on the resources available to the FRC during the evaluation period. Users record the immediate outputs of their work toward the end of the self evaluation cycle. The cycle is completed by prompting FRCs to examine the impact of their work. In this way, the process becomes an ongoing cycle wherein changes and developments are recorded and compared.

From 2012 much of the socio-economic data that will inform this overview will be made available centrally and accessed through the SPEAK system.

Figure 2 illustrates the four distinct sections to the SPEAK FRC self evaluation cycle.



Operational Environment

This section collects data relevant to the arena (community) within which the FRC operates, the main issues affecting families and the nature of other statutory or community responses to those issues. In this section, there is also some information collected about matters internal to the organisation. This data is agreed and entered into the system during a facilitated team meeting of the Voluntary Board of Directors at the commencement of a self evaluation cycle.

Resource Audit

This section collects data on how the time and effort of the organisation was spent during the evaluation cycle. In particular, it looks at:

- The amount of time spent on each working method and approach employed by the organisation's staff and volunteers. The nine working methods categorised

within the resource audit section are: Project Maintenance and Project Development; Establishing Community Groups, Networks and Initiatives; Establishing Community Arts Initiatives; Helping Existing Community Groups; Providing Education and Training Opportunities; Providing Information and Advice; Hosting Counselling Services; Providing Front-of-House Administrative Supports; Contributing to Policy Work.

- Work with the different target groups and working partners (the list of target groups for which data is collected is presented in Appendix Four)
- The development issues being addressed by each action undertaken.

In this section, each staff member / volunteer provides information about his or her own work on an individual basis. This exercise is completed as the organisation approaches the end of the self evaluation cycle.

Outputs

This section collects data relating to the direct outputs of the FRC's work under nine categories relating to the nine working methods employed by FRCs (see above). Much of this information is quantitative in nature. This data is collected at an organisational level, where inputs are agreed and entered during a facilitated staff meeting following the completion of all individual Resource Audits by staff / volunteers.

Impact Indicators

Data relating to the broader impact of an FRC's work is collected in this section. This data is qualitative in nature and refers to the broader consequences of the outputs identified. It also looks at factors that may have helped or hindered the achievement of each impact. This exercise is completed at a facilitated team meeting of the Voluntary Board of Directors. As local residents and members of specific target groups, it is often the Voluntary Directors that are most keenly aware of the impact that an FRC's work is having on a community.

The data collected under these four sections within each FRC for the calendar year 2010 was submitted to the Family Support Agency at the end of January 2011. Each dataset returned was then subjected to an initial inspection to identify potentially

erroneous data entries. Datasets identified as atypical or unexpected were noted and then queried with the relevant FRC. In each case, judgement regarding the accuracy of the data was made by the FRC coordinator. All amendments to the data were made at FRC level. A second data inspection was undertaken following the same process. All datasets were compiled into a Programme Database in June 2011.

For the purpose of comparison this report distinguishes FRCs into those located within Dublin (N=19) and those located outside Dublin (N=87). A further distinction is made between newly-established FRCs (N=21) and well-established FRCs (N=85). For the purposes of this report, 'newly-established' refers to FRCs established in 2006 or more recently. Date of establishment is based on data entered into the SPEAK FRC system. Newly-established FRCs are identified within a full list of FRCs that contributed to this report in Appendix Two.

Where necessary, the following sections of this report include separate notes on the methodology employed to gather the specific data relating to that section.

Engagement with SPEAK FRC does not constitute an external evaluation. SPEAK FRC is a tool for data collection and self-evaluation; its strength lies in promoting critical thinking to inform positive changes to practice at all levels within FRCs.

During 2010, SPEAK Consulting Ltd. worked with FRCs to design and pilot a new generation of SPEAK FRC software (SPEAK FRC 3). SPEAK FRC 3 reflects the seven programme objectives adopted by the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011) and requires FRCs to establish a link between each of their actions and a programme objective. It is expected that data relating to the work of FRCs during 2011 will be recorded using the new SPEAK FRC 3 system.

Section 3 FRC Resources: Funding, Staff and Volunteers

FRCs receive a core funding allocation from the Family Support Agency. Core funding is ring-fenced to cover the employment costs relating to core-funded staff, rent and associated overheads. While core funding does not include a budget to enable FRCs implement their action plans, it does provide FRCs with the means to develop and maintain a secure organisational structure capable of accessing and administering funding from other sources.

FRCs also rely on volunteerism. Volunteers are engaged at all levels of FRC activity; fulfilling the roles of Voluntary Directors and assisting staff to implement each FRC's action plan. As volunteer participation at the level of Voluntary Director is central to FRCs' commitment to develop local capacity and community leadership it is regarded as an output of FRCs' work rather than a resource. As such, it is discussed in Section 4 below.

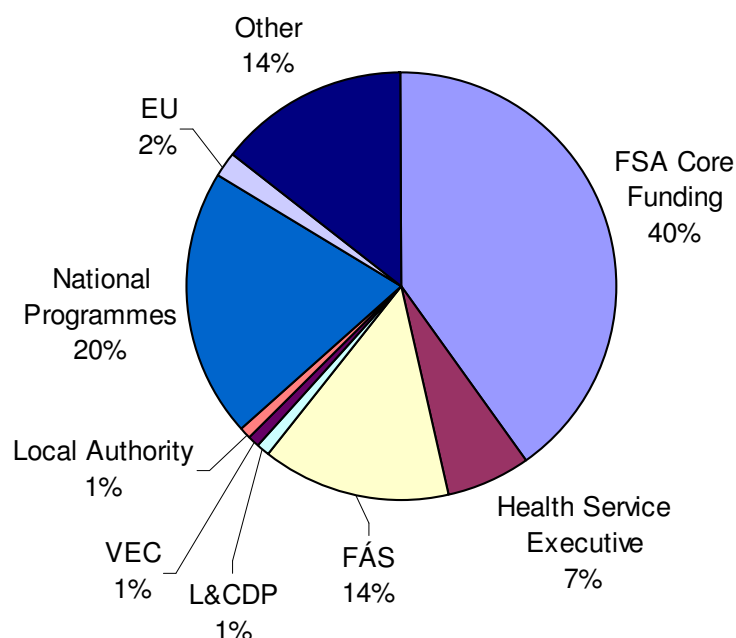
Funding within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Core funding granted by the Family Support Agency to the 106 FRCs that contributed to the national programme database in 2010 amounted to €14.6 million, an average of €138,164 per FRC. The amount of core funding available to each FRC varies according to their operating context.

During the same period FRCs administered a further €22 million from other funding sources bringing the total operating budget of all FRCs to €36.7 million. This figure represents a small increase on the total 2009 operating budget of €35.4 million.

Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the principal funding sources accessed by FRCs during 2010.

Figure 3: Funding Sources, 2010



Core funding provided by the FSA remains the cornerstone upon which FRCs operate. Notwithstanding this, across the programme core funding accounts for only 40% of the total funding administered by FRCs. In Dublin, core funding falls to just 26% of total FRC funding, whereas the corresponding figure for FRCs located outside Dublin is 45%.

As a rule, Dublin FRCs attracted considerably more additional funding than FRCs located outside the capital. While an average FRC in Dublin attracted an additional €392,448 during the year, those FRCs located outside of Dublin attracted an average of €160,395. For the most part, additional funding derives from FÁS through the Community Employment Scheme and from the National Childcare Investment Programme's Community Childcare Subvention Scheme. A small number of individual Dublin FRCs accounted for a large amount of additional funding received; St. Andrew's FRC, Fatima Groups United and Ballyfermot FRC sourced an additional

€5.8 million between them. Similarly, a small number of FRCs outside Dublin also attracted large amounts of funding into their FRCs. Among these were St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre, Mullaghmat Cortolvin FRC, St. Canice's Community Action Ltd. and St. Brigid's Community Centre who accounted for a combined €3 million.

Many FRCs did not access funding additional to their core allocation from the FSA. It is not clear from the data submitted whether this was through choice or through a lack of success with funding applications.

As in 2009, 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 2010. One FRC received a private donation of €50,000 toward unspecified capital costs.

Despite the fact that the budget administered by FRCs during 2010 was slightly larger than that administered during the previous year, many FRCs felt that 2010 was a challenging year where demand for community development approaches and family support work increased but budgets remained largely static.

'The country's current economic difficulties have reduced the amount of funding opportunities for FRCs...we are stretched to capacity in terms of the workloads being undertaken by staff and the need from the community is constantly growing. This challenge will most likely remain until such time as we can identify a way to secure more man power whether that be volunteers or paid staff.' **Sacred Heart FRC, Waterford**

Staffing within Family Resource Centres

All FRCs have 'core' staff, funded by the Family Support Agency through the FRCs' core funding allocation. All Project Coordinators and Project Administrators are funded through core funding. Some FRCs have a core funded Development Worker. In 2010, total core staff comprised 318 people filling 256 full-time equivalent positions. This corresponds to 3 staff filling 2.4 full-time equivalent positions per FRC.

There is a considerable gender imbalance within FRC core-funded staff. Fewer than 13% of core-funded staff are men. This gender imbalance within the core-funded staff body has been evident since the collection of this data commenced in 2004.

Alongside core-funded staff, a large proportion of FRCs employ staff funded through other sources. Combined, the 106 FRCs employ a staff body of 1,117 people in 703 fulltime equivalent positions. This corresponds to 10.5 staff filling 6.6 full-time equivalent positions per FRC. This figure represents an increase of 79 full time equivalent positions when compared with the 2009 figure of 624. This increase brings the numbers back into line with figures for 2008 when 729 staff were funded through additional sources to work in FRCs.

These figures demonstrate the value of FRCs to statutory bodies, as well as other community and voluntary organisations, seeking to work with local communities but who do not have local offices and/or management structures. In this context, FRCs can be seen as a conduit between national programmes such as the National Childcare Investment Programme's Community Childcare Subvention Scheme or the Health Service Executive's Family Support Measures and local communities. Where national organisations or programmes are in a position to fund workers, FRCs can often provide office space within the local communities, connections to those most in need within communities and the capacity to supervise work and report to funders.

FRCs in Dublin are particularly successful at employing workers funded through external sources. During 2010, the 19 FRCs in Dublin hosted 423 such workers who filled 304 full-time equivalent positions. This corresponds to 22.2 staff filling 16 full-time positions per FRC in Dublin.

The Contribution of Volunteers to Implementing FRC Action Plans

In addition to the contribution made by Voluntary Directors, FRCs rely heavily on local communities to contribute to the implementation of their action plans. The nature of this voluntary contribution ranges from participation in once-off initiatives such as renovating community facilities to fulfilling scheduled commitments on an on-going basis, for example supervising at weekly youth clubs.

During 2010, a total of 365 full-time equivalent positions were filled by 2,783 local volunteers; or an average of 26 volunteers per FRC. This contribution is distinct from that made by Voluntary Directors outlined in Section 4. Calculated at the minimum wage level, the contribution made by volunteers to implementing FRC action plans (as distinct from, and in addition to, the contribution of Voluntary Directors) is valued at over €5.7 million during 2010.¹ Calculated at the level of average earnings it is valued at €16.5 million.² These estimates are notional but give an indication of the potential economic value of the contribution made by volunteers.

The gender imbalance evident in the FRC core-funded staff is mirrored by those volunteers contributing to the implementation of FRC action plans. Just over twice as many women as men volunteer with local FRCs. This gender imbalance is reflected throughout the programme and does not vary between FRCs that are urban or rural, or those that are newly-established or well-established.

Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Dublin based FRCs tend to have fewer local people volunteering to implement their action plans than those FRCs outside of Dublin (an average of 16.5 volunteers to an average of 27.1 volunteers). However, those volunteering with Dublin based FRCs contribute an average of 6.7 hours per week whereas their counterparts outside of Dublin contribute an average of 4.3 hours per week. It is noteworthy that those FRCs that have been operating for over four years tend to have a slightly larger pool of local

¹ Since 1 July 2011 under SI 331 of 2011 the national minimum wage for an experienced adult employee is €8.65 per hour.

² CSO survey on Earnings Hours and Employment Costs (EHECS) covering all sectors of the economy other than Agriculture, forestry and fishing for 2010.

volunteers than those that have been established more recently (28 volunteers per FRC compared to 25.75 volunteers per FRC). This reflects the fact that it takes time for FRCs to build local leadership and develop relationships within the communities where they are established. This thesis is supported through comparison with the numbers volunteering with FRCs in previous years; an average of 26 people volunteered with each FRC during 2010 and 2009 whereas the corresponding figures for 2008 and 2007 were 23 and 20 respectively.

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

When identifying factors that helped attract local volunteers, many FRCs referred to the impact of the current economic recession within their local communities.

‘We experienced a massive increase in the number of volunteers who contributed to the project and our various activities. The Centre moved to a new much larger and more visible premises [but] the building required considerable renovating... We had helped a great many trades-people when the recession hit and a lot of them were still engaging with the Resource Centre in one way or another. A huge amount of work was carried out by volunteers both skilled and unskilled.’ **Kells People's Resource Centre**

‘All of the projects that we work on would genuinely not be possible without the involvement of the volunteers. The Resource Centre's management took a decision [that promoting volunteerism] would be the best way to support the unemployed in Westport. By giving people the opportunity to use their skills while receiving the satisfaction and social interaction that is necessary to maintain a decent sense of self.’ **Westport FRC**

When identifying factors that hindered volunteerism a number of FRCs made reference to their limited capacity to meet the demands (in terms of training and management) associated with supporting large numbers of volunteers.

‘There has been increased dependence on volunteerism in order to provide classes and courses. This in turn impacts on the increased work load of staff to source, maintain and support the volunteers.’ **Balally Family Resource Centre Ltd.**

‘We have a pool of volunteers who help us primarily with our afterschools programme. It should be noted that volunteer support and management is extremely time consuming and requires huge input of time by the Centre Manager.’ **Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.**

An associated challenge concerned the delay in receiving Garda vetting for new volunteers.

‘Due to increase demand for services we feel that we need more volunteers but we find Garda clearance to be a hindrance due to the time involved...also people are reluctant to avail of the Garda clearance (sic).’ **Teach Oscail FRC**

‘Long delays in obtaining Garda clearance when filling vacancies (sic).’
Cherry Orchard FRC

One FRC referred to ‘changes in social welfare restrictions’ and ‘mandatory reporting [to social welfare offices where] people are volunteering with the centre’ as a deterrent to potential volunteers.

Section 4 Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities

By adopting a community development approach to their work, FRCs commit to a methodology that values both task and process equally. The task is the achievement of improved outcomes in terms of family well-being through the provision of more accessible and effective family supports. The process requires that these family supports are provided in a way that is participative and empowering for local communities.

Developing Family Resource Centres as participative and empowering organisations that build the capacity and leadership abilities of local communities contributes to the following programme objectives as adopted in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011):

- Being part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
- Being included and participating in society.

Note on Methodology

Data relating to the development of capacity and community leadership within FRC catchment areas concerns the process through which FRCs identify potential community leaders, provide the required training and supports to enable full participation as Directors of an FRC and practice planning, evaluation and review skills. This data is collected in the Resource Audit section of the SPEAK system.

Each FRC staff member undertakes this exercise on an individual basis. Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to identifying and recruiting Voluntary Directors (community leaders)
- Time committed to training Voluntary Directors (community leaders)
- Time committed to supporting Voluntary Directors (community leaders)

- Time committed to attending meetings of the Voluntary Board of Directors
- Time committed by Voluntary Directors to planning, evaluation and review.

SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

Voluntary Directors comment on how they perceive this work to impact on families within the community during a facilitated team meeting.

Outputs in relation to Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities

In 2010, a total of 1,109 people served as Voluntary Directors within FRCs. Collectively, they contributed more than 44,857 voluntary hours fulfilling the duties associated with this role. This equates to a contribution of 1,282 working weeks.

On average, each FRC has 10.3 Voluntary Directors. While this figure is broadly in line with figures for 2009 and 2008, where FRCs had an average of 11 and 9 Voluntary Directors respectively, it remains considerably lower than figures recorded for 2007 and 2006 where FRCs had an average of 17 and 16 Voluntary Directors respectively. With an average of only 8.4 members, Voluntary Boards of Directors in Dublin tend to be smaller than the national average.

Through their participation, Voluntary Directors gain invaluable experience as company directors, employers, managers and development strategists. They develop and practice skills relating to planning and review, organisational development and staff support and supervision. Voluntary Directors fulfil their duties in line with company law and in compliance with corporate governance requirements.

Comments made by Voluntary Directors demonstrated the breadth of skills acquired and practiced through their involvement in FRCs.

‘During 2010 I was actively involved in the operational management of the FRC and following training I became a member of the newly-established Childcare Sub Group... I also spent significant time dealing with HR / Staffing issues.’ **Breffni Community Development Company, Co. Leitrim**

‘This year I have become more aware of all that is involved in running the centre. I am a member of the staff support subgroup. I have been involved in meetings about accounts with Donegal Local Development Company...I was involved in the review and planning ...I attended committee training, was on the subcommittee for the President's visit and helped interviewing for youth and childcare positions...I became Company Secretary in 2010.’ **Cara House FRC, Letterkenny**

‘During my time here I participated in training for Strengthening Families Programme and Children First Child Protection training in order to facilitate this group. I also did Fáilte Isteach training.’ **Ballina Family Resource Centre**

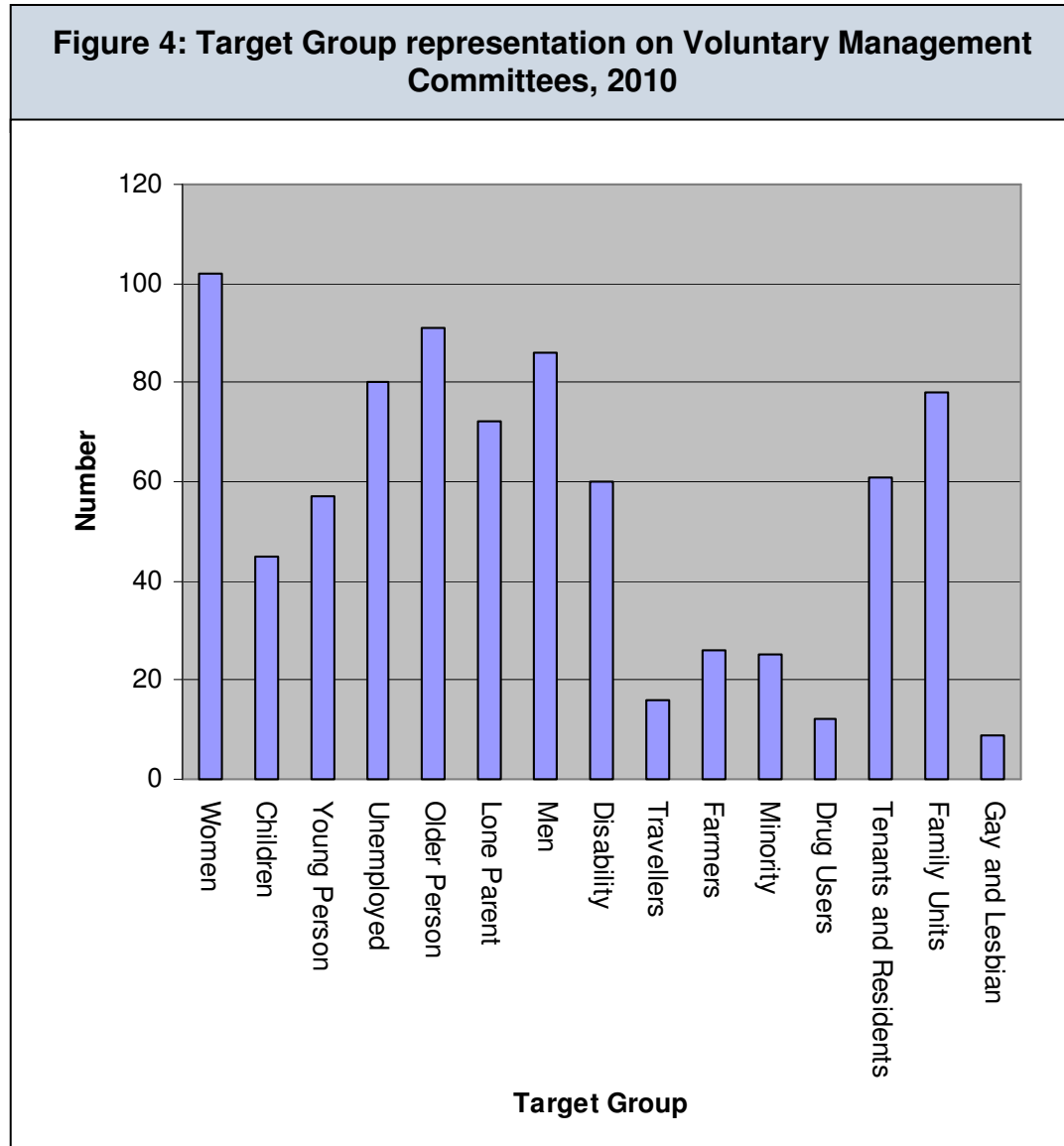
‘I meet with the Co-ordinator and staff team to plan work, review progress, discuss training options and supports and discuss any client issues or policy work.’ **Croom Family Resource Centre Ltd.**

‘I am staff liaison officer with the Board and meet with staff regularly. I hold supervision meetings with the co-ordinator approx. every 4 weeks and deal with all day to day staff related issues. I have been part of the recruitment panel for our new development worker.’ **Monsignor Mc Carthy Family Resource Centre, Athlone**

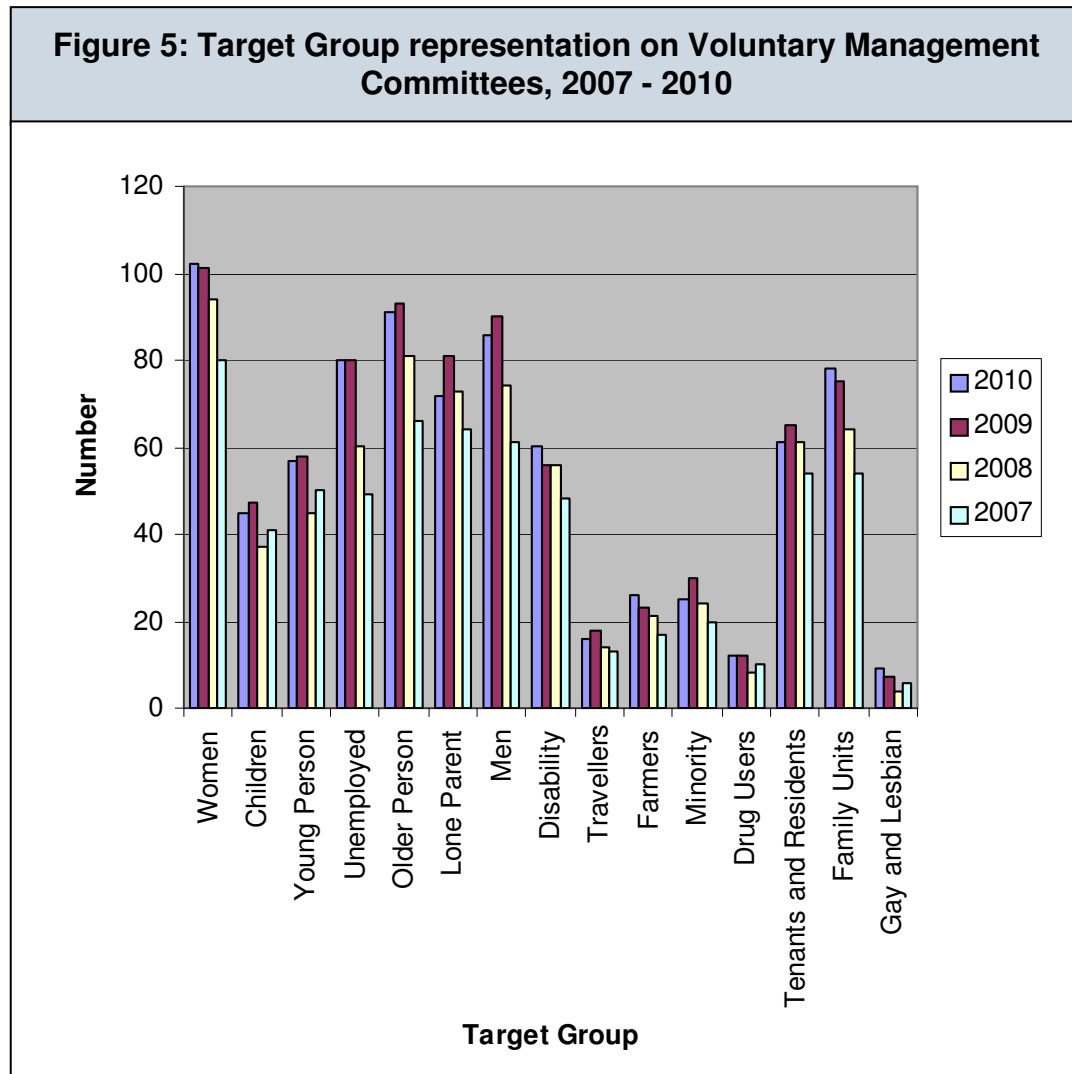
Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

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; this

is especially true of FRC Voluntary Boards of Directors, where strategic decisions are taken relating to the focus of an FRC's work. Figure 4 illustrates the target groups represented on Voluntary Boards of Directors during 2010.



Very little change has taken place in the composition of Voluntary Boards of Directors since 2006. Figure 5 illustrates that those target groups that were most frequently, and least frequently, represented on Voluntary Boards of Directors during 2010 have remained consistent since 2007.



While no FRC noted that they were experiencing difficulties identifying specific target groups, building relationships with specific target groups or inculcating a sense of ownership over the FRC within these target groups, a number did mention that the weight of responsibility associated with Voluntary Directorship was effectively dissuading some people from participating at this level.

‘The level of responsibility involved with being a member of the Board of Management, i.e. being an employer, becoming a director...is proving off-putting to prospective members.’ **Balally Family Resource Centre Ltd.**

'Falling numbers of Voluntary Directors and increasing pressures on those who remained on the Board also proved challenging.' **Breffni Community Development Company Ltd., Co. Leitrim**

'A lot of people are happy to volunteer their time as a result of being unemployed. However, there is still the issue of finding it difficult to encourage people to volunteer on the Board of Management as a result of the legal obligations and responsibilities.'

Listowel Family Resource Centre

Section 5 Establishing and Coordinating a Community Response to Local Needs

FRCs act as a catalyst for change. This is achieved through facilitating local individuals and family members to identify their own needs and to work collectively to deliver a local response to these needs. Responses might include the delivery of a particular service for local individuals or families, coordination of a community initiative or the establishment and development of local support groups and issue based community and voluntary groups.

In seeking to benefit those who experience the greatest level of need within local communities, FRCs prioritise work with specific local target groups (as listed in Appendix Four). However, many FRCs recognise that being associated exclusively with specific societal sub-groups could lead to the stigmatisation of those who participate in FRC initiatives. For this reason, FRCs may encourage widespread participation in, and with, community responses while paying particular attention to the needs of those participants who are most in need.

Individual community groups and initiatives, depending on the nature of their work, contribute to specific family support programme objectives as adopted in the Strategic Framework for *Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011). Figure 6 presents a categorisation of community groups and initiatives under each of the seven programme objectives.

Note on Methodology

The data presented in this section relates to the number and nature of community groups founded by FRCs. Data is also collected relating to the variety of services developed and delivered by FRCs. Information concerning once off initiatives such as community festivals and parades is also presented here. The quantitative data informing this section is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK FRC system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. All data relating to

the identified impacts of this work is entered in a facilitated meeting of Voluntary Directors.

Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to founding community groups and initiatives
- The name of community groups and initiatives founded and the objective of each
- The role of the FRC is developing and coordinating each community group and initiative (as much of this work may be undertaken in partnership with other service providers or development programmes)
- The number of participants / service users within each community group or initiative
- The specific target groups (where known) participating
- The key development issues being addressed by each community group or initiative
- The 'developmental status' of each community group or initiative (whether the group / initiative is dependant upon the FRC for support or whether it has developed the capacity to operate independently of the FRC)
- Any funding that may have been sourced by the community group or initiative
- Any employment that may have been created by the community group or initiative
- The achievements of the community group or initiative to date
- Any other notes relating to the community group or initiative.

SPEAK FRC users are then asked to comment on why they undertook these tasks and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years. As the work of many community groups or initiatives is long-term in its nature, the system allows users to enter data on the same community groups and initiatives each year. This results in detailed accounts of this work being constructed over time.

To inform the categorisation presented in this section, a survey was conducted of the 1,543 qualitative descriptions entered into SPEAK; one relating to each of the

community groups and initiatives recorded within the system. While some community groups or initiatives appear relevant to more than one programme objective the categorisation presented in this section lists them under a single programme objective only; that to which the group or initiative seems most relevant.

No reason was provided for the formation of 35 of the community groups or initiatives. Eight community groups or initiatives were described as fund-raising instruments for the FRCs and in the case of 4 community groups or initiatives no obvious link to a programme objective could be found. Consequently, these 47 groups were omitted from further analysis. A further 57 community groups or initiatives were described as inter-agency coordinating groups or training courses and, as such, do not receive further consideration here. Rather, they are considered in Section 11 and Section 7 respectively.

Data concerning the number of participants / service users within each community group or initiative was not always entered into the system. This points to a clear limitation of the data presented here and suggests that one should consider these figures to under-represent the true number of participants / service users.

Many community groups and initiatives are formed to address multiple needs (for individuals, families and communities). For this reason, categorising community groups or initiatives with reference to individual programme objectives can be difficult. This process led to a number of subjective categorisations being made. For example, the provision of childcare services has been categorised in this section as contributing to the programme objective of supporting active learning. An alternative analysis may, with equal validity, have categorised the provision of childcare services under the programme objective of promoting healthy families (both physically and mentally).

Furthermore, the distinction between the two programme objectives of 'promoting positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and community' and 'promoting inclusion and participation in society' is very subtle.

Outputs in relation to Founding and Coordinating a Community Response to Local Needs

In total, the SPEAK FRC National Programme Database contains data relating to 1,439 distinct community groups and initiatives. FRCs contributed to the foundation of each of these 1,439 community groups and initiatives.

Figure 6: Total Number of Community Groups / Initiatives and number of Participants Categorised by Family Support Outcome*		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Healthy, both physically and mentally	174	2555
Supported in active learning	151	4253
Safe from accidental and intentional harm	46	559
Economically secure	38	1858
Secure in the immediate and wider physical environment	80	2646
Part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community	642	9484
Included and participating in society	308	7580
Totals	1439	28935

* Includes all community groups and initiatives active during 2010 (irrespective of the year of their establishment)

A more detailed classification of these 1,439 community responses follows. Figures 6(a) to 6(g) arrange community groups or initiatives recorded in the database under common headings which are, in turn, catalogued under each of the programme objectives set out in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011).

Figure 6(a): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme		
<i>Outcome Healthy, both physically and mentally</i>		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Parents Support Groups (includes Marriage Preparation Programmes)	50	807
Physical health (includes delivery of medical services such as Chiropody Services, health related support groups such as Cancer Support Groups and health related initiatives such as Lifestyle Challenge programmes)	43	506
Drugs (includes support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous)	17	148
Bereavement (includes Rainbows Groups and bereavement support groups)	17	530
Mental Health Groups (includes advocacy groups, mental health initiatives such as seminars and conferences as well as support groups)	15	211
Personal Development programmes	10	46
Meals on Wheels services	8	62
Separated Couples / Parents (includes Family Conferencing services)	7	5
Meditation / Spiritual	4	154
Suicide Prevention	3	86
Totals	174	2555

Figure 6(a) provides a breakdown of the 174 community responses contributing to the achievement of more healthy families, both physically and mentally. The most frequent type of response listed relates to support groups for parents (50 instances). Although only 17 bereavement groups have been established, these responses have a very high participation rate with 530 people partaking.

Figure 6(b) below illustrates the contribution that FRCs are making toward the creation of an environment wherein people are supported in active learning. With 34 instances, the provision of a childcare service is the most frequent type of community based response initiated by FRCs toward the achievement of this programme objective.

Figure 6(b): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme		
<i>Outcome Supported in Active Learning</i>		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Childcare Providers	34	1597
Afterschools Clubs	31	470
IT Learning Support Groups	19	496
Out of Schools initiatives (including summer camps)	19	1049
Literacy programmes	14	74
Homework Clubs	11	264
Study Groups	9	38
Preschools	9	136
Playschools	2	58
Breakfast Clubs	2	26
Lunch Clubs	1	45
<i>Totals</i>	151	4253

The high numbers (1,519 people) participating in Afterschools Clubs and Out-of-Schools Initiatives, such as Summer Camps, demonstrate the important role that FRCs play in providing a supervised programme of learning-centred activities to children outside to school hours.

The contribution of community responses established by FRCs toward the creation of an environment for families that is safe from accidental and intentional harm is demonstrated in Figure 6(c).

Figure 6(c): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme		
<i>Outcome Safe from Accidental and Intentional Harm</i>		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Carers' Support Groups	21	144
Domestic Violence (includes advocacy groups and support groups)	9	293
Neighbourhood Watch Initiatives	7	35
Strengthening Families Programmes	5	18
Peace / Cross Border Initiatives	2	40
Elder Abuse Advocacy Group	1	25
Garda Information Service	1	4
Totals	46	559

Groups established to address the needs of Carers form the most frequent response aimed at achieving greater safety for families (21 instances).

The work of FRCs on the issue of domestic violence is also notable. In total, 293 people participated in initiatives that either support the victims of domestic violence or are advocating in relation to this issue.

A notable feature of Figure 6(d) is the number of community responses established in relation to the issue of unemployment (20 instances). These responses comprise support groups for unemployed people as well as initiatives that are aimed at helping people access employment such as Jobs Clubs and activation initiatives.

Alongside these responses, FRCs also contributed to the establishment of ten enterprise initiatives.

Figure 6(d): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme		
Outcome <i>Economically Secure</i>		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Unemployed Groups (includes support groups, career development, Jobs Clubs and activation initiatives)	20	244
Enterprise Groups	10	43
Savings Banks	4	1526
St. Vincent de Paul Chapters	2	5
Fundraising Groups (includes fundraising for community initiatives; excludes fundraising for FRCs)	1	40
Non-Migrant Workers Support Group	1	0
Totals	38	1858

The participation of over 1,500 people in community based ‘savings banks’ is also significant. The high numbers contributing to these savings banks suggests they are well embedded within those local communities where they operate.

When working toward greater security for families within their immediate and wider physical environment, the emphasis of community responses founded by FRCs has been on the development of Housing / Residents / Estate Management groups. In total, almost 2,300 people participated in the 47 such responses that are recorded in the SPEAK Programme Database.

Figure 6(e): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme		
<i>Outcome Secure in the immediate and wider physical environment</i>		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Housing / Residents / Estate Management (including Regeneration Groups)	47	2297
Community Facilities (including playground committees, community libraries and renovation committees)	13	204
Campaigning Groups (with emphasis on local issues / needs)	12	25
Environmental Groups (with emphasis on local environment)	5	83
Community Mediation Group	2	12
Community Care Group	1	25
Totals	80	2646

The number of responses aimed at establishing or renovating community facilities is also noteworthy. Over 200 people contributed to the 13 such initiatives founded by FRCs.

Figure 6(f) catalogues community responses founded by FRCs that relate to the programme objective of building positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community. The broad scope of responses encompassed by this programme objective has resulted in the greatest number of responses (642) being listed here. The number of Youth Groups (160) and Older People's Groups (101) is particularly significant when considering the work undertaken by FRCs in founding and coordinating community responses to locally identified needs.

Figure 6(f): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme
Outcome Part of Positive Networks of Family, Friends, Neighbours and the
Community

Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Youth Groups (includes Youth Cafés and No Name Clubs)	160	2551
Older People's Groups (including social groups and telephone befriending services)	101	1187
Women's Groups	78	786
Parent and Toddlers' Groups	62	2334
Intercultural Groups (includes support groups, social groups and advocacy groups for Asylum Seekers and Refugees as well as groups promoting interaction between cultures)	48	661
Men's Groups (includes support groups, social groups and advocacy groups; many include emphasis on men living alone)	46	387
Disability Groups (incl. support groups, social groups and advocacy groups for people with disabilities and their families)	29	294
Lone Parents' Groups (includes support groups, social groups and advocacy groups)	28	72
Intergenerational Groups	22	241
Children's Groups (including scouts, children's discos, clubs, etc.)	16	282
General Family Support Groups (includes Family Respite Centre, Supports for Families where members in Addiction Recovery; Supports for Families in Need)	14	387
Mothers' Groups (includes Incredible Years programmes)	12	15
Travellers' Groups (includes social groups and advocacy groups)	11	82
LGBT Groups (incl. support groups, social groups and advocacy groups for LGBT people and for their families)	6	95
Fathers' Groups (includes support groups, father and son groups and supervised access initiatives)	6	90
Native Irish Speakers Groups	3	20
Totals	642	9484

The community responses founded by FRCs that seek to promote greater inclusion and participation in society are catalogued in Figure 6(g). Community Arts initiatives are the most common type of response listed here (158 instances). Groups aimed at welcoming and integrating people that have recently moved into local communities and Sports Groups are also frequent and attract high rates of participation.

Figure 6(g): Community Groups and Initiatives linked to the Programme		
<i>Outcome Included and Participating in Society</i>		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Arts Groups	158	2849
Groups for People ‘New to Community’ (welcoming initiatives and social groups)	39	1591
Sports Groups (including community games, sports clubs and informal sporting events)	38	1542
Community Gardens	25	437
Isolated Rural Dwellers (including sports and social groups, care and repair groups, rural transport groups)	20	539
Heritage Groups (including oral history groups)	14	160
Active Citizenship Groups (including community development programmes)	9	312
Community Consultation / Research Groups	3	60
Family Fun Days	2	90
Totals	308	7580

Of the 1,439 community groups and initiatives recorded in the SPEAK FRC Programme Database and referred to in Figure 6, 321 were formed during 2010. This represents a significant increase on the 274 new community groups and initiatives that were founded during 2009.

The data presented in Figures 6 and 7 demonstrates that while the community groups and initiatives, for which FRCs are partly or solely responsible, contribute to each of the programme’s family support objectives, a particularly strong emphasis has been

placed on the two final programme objectives: building ‘positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community’ and promoting ‘inclusion and participation within society’.

Figure 7: Number of Community Groups / Initiatives founded during 2010 and number of Participants Categorised by Outcome		
Concern of Group / Initiative	Number of instances	Numbers participating
Healthy, both physically and mentally	25	279
Supported in active learning	32	622
Safe from accidental and intentional harm	10	61
Economically secure	17	201
Secure in the immediate and wider physical environment	28	337
Part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community	128	1266
Included and participating in society	81	1211
Totals	321	3977

Combined, the community groups and initiatives founded by FRCs during 2010 attracted €2,475,863 in additional funding and created 108 job opportunities. The seven childcare initiatives formed by FRCs during 2010 accounted for €1,784,964 of this funding and 55 of these jobs.

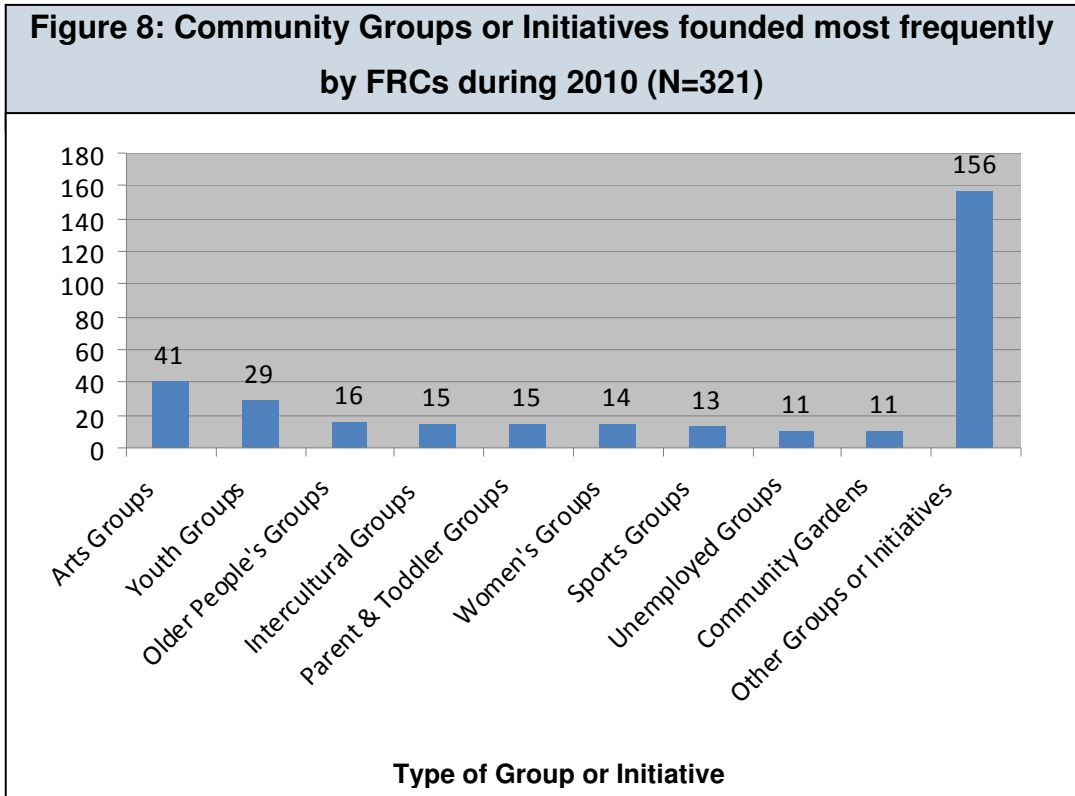


Figure 8 indicates that the most common type of community group or initiatives founded by FRCs during 2010 were Arts Groups. Community Arts are regarded by FRCs as a means of engaging with specific sections of the community that may not be participating in other developmental approaches.

‘We have run three arts projects and have noted the potential for personal development of the participants. We further noted that people are comfortable participating in art and drama and so their confidence grows quickly.’ **Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd., Co. Sligo**

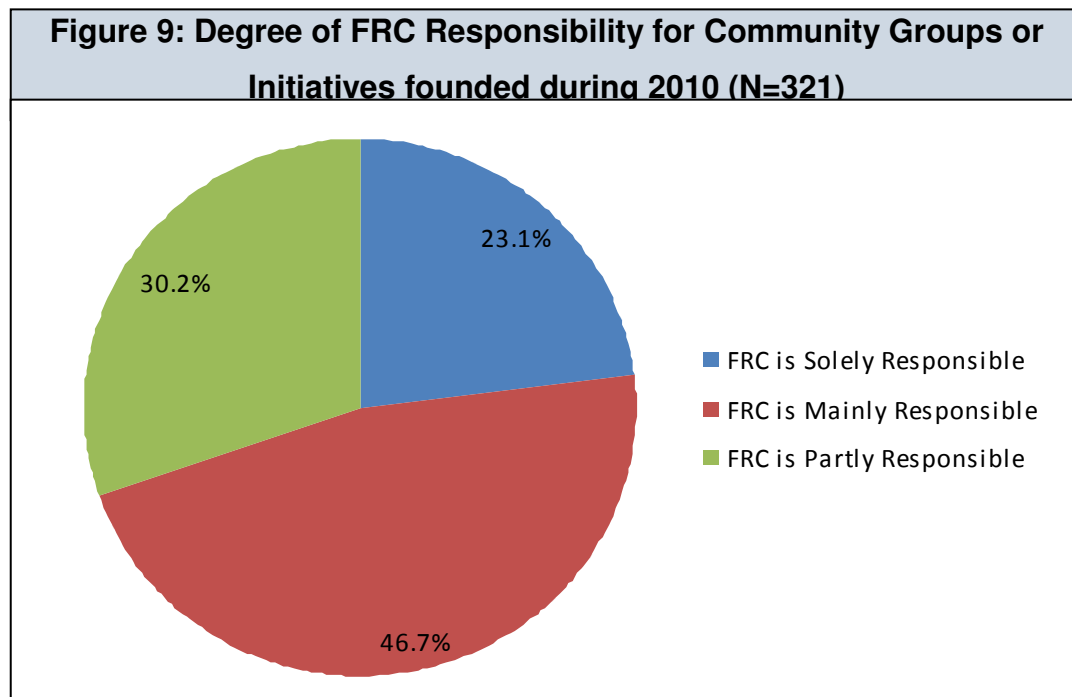
‘The PEACE III Arts Project with Fathers and Children along with the Parent and Toddler Drama Group were very good at raising awareness of issues associated with diversity. The final celebratory event was very well attended by the Indian and Pakistani communities who do not tend to engage with the services we provide in the FRC.’ **Sligo FRC**

Once a relationship with participants has been established Community Arts can be effective as a means for communities to explore social issues and to articulate a response to these issues.

‘This year a group of young people participated in a graffiti art workshop. The facilitator allowed time for the young people to freely discuss the issue of drugs within their community. They reflected on this challenge through a graffiti art piece. This work helped them discuss the negative impacts [of drugs] but also recognised the positives in the area.’ **Clara Community & Family Support Centre Ltd., Co. Offaly**

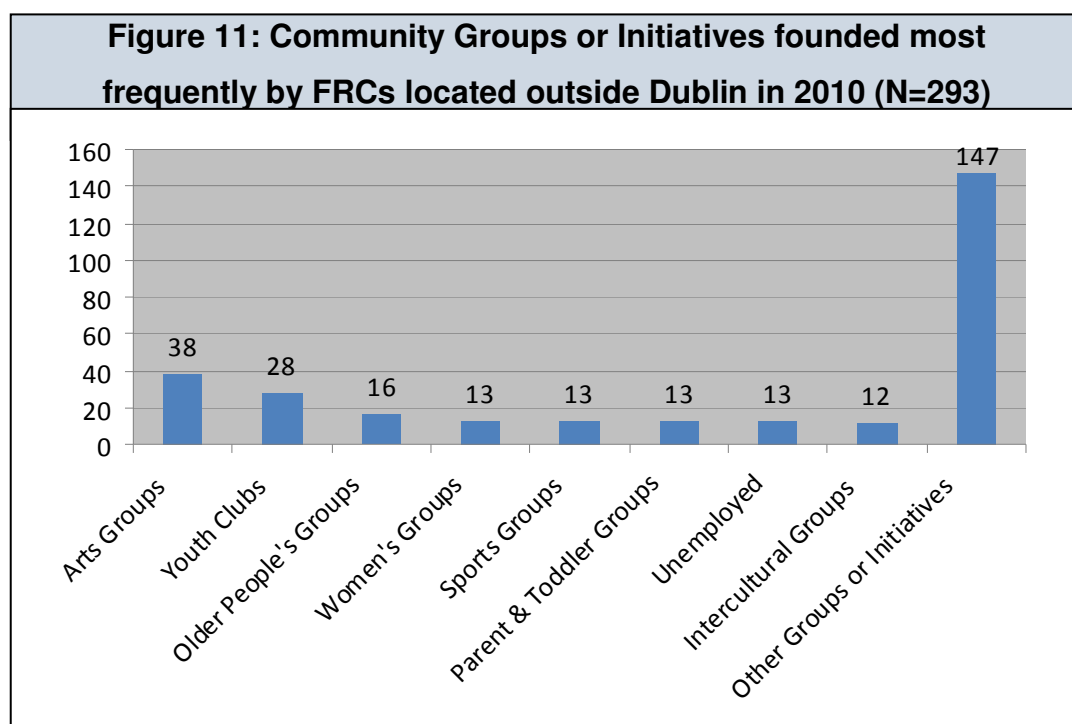
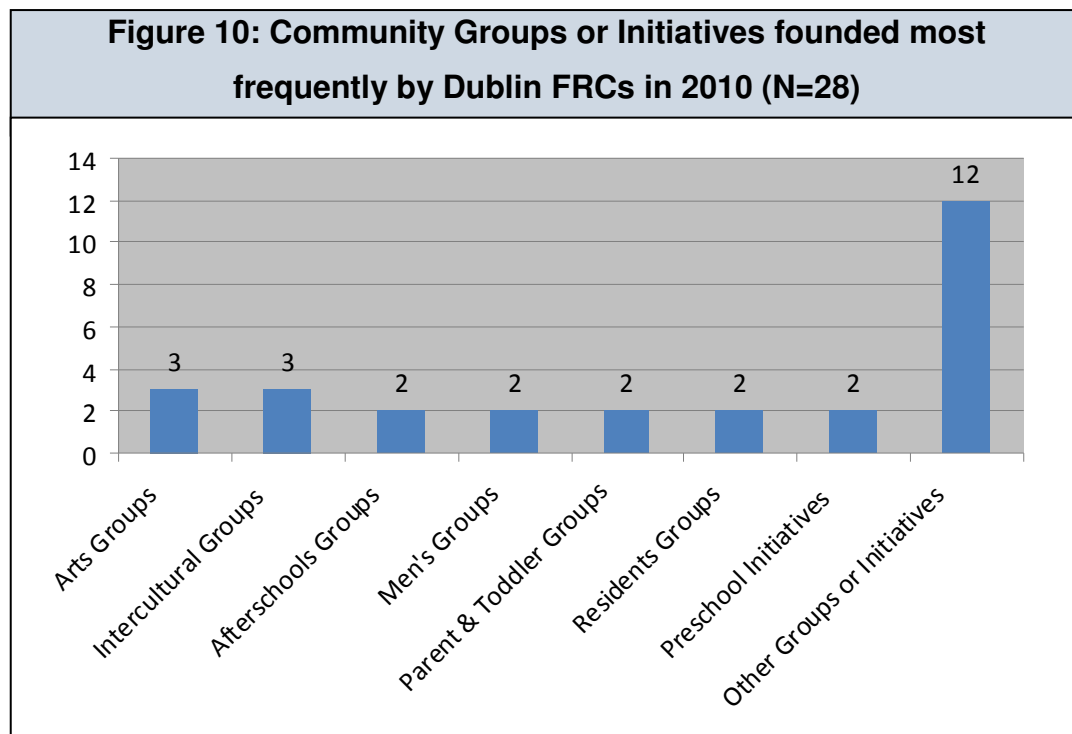
Alongside Community Arts Groups, Youth Groups and Older People’s Groups were most frequently founded by FRCs during 2010. This is in keeping with previous years where these three categories of community groups and initiatives have been most frequently established by FRCs.

FRCs seek to build partnerships between other statutory agencies and voluntary organisations operating within local communities. For this reason, FRCs tend to work in partnership when founding community groups or initiatives. During 2010, FRCs were either ‘solely’ or ‘mainly’ responsible for 69.8% of all community groups or initiatives founded.



Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

A comparison of the type of community groups or initiatives founded during 2010 by FRCs in Dublin and those located throughout the rest of the country demonstrates a broad correspondence. However, FRCs located outside of County Dublin did place more emphasis on Youth Clubs and Older People’s Groups than did their Dublin counterparts.



Although Figures 10 and 11 demonstrate that the types of community groups and initiatives being established does not vary greatly between Dublin and the rest of the country, it is interesting that the average Dublin FRC founded less than half the number of new community groups or initiatives (just under 1.5) than did their counterparts outside of Dublin (3.2) during the year. It is also worth noting that with an average of 8.4 participants, those community groups and initiatives founded by Dublin FRCs tend to contain considerably fewer participants than do those located outside of Dublin where the average is 12.7 participants.

A further distinction between FRCs located in Dublin and those located outside of Dublin is evident in the approach taken to founding new community groups and initiatives. Whereas FRCs located in Dublin are 'solely' responsible for over 35% of new groups or initiatives, those located outside of Dublin are 'solely' responsible for less than 22%.

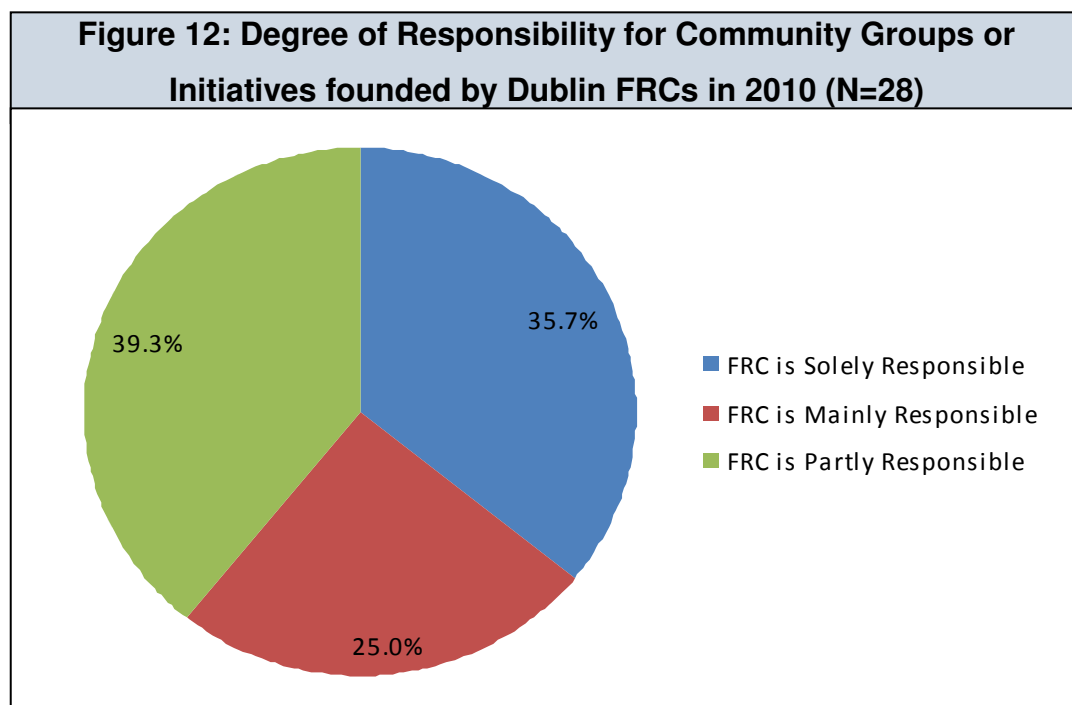
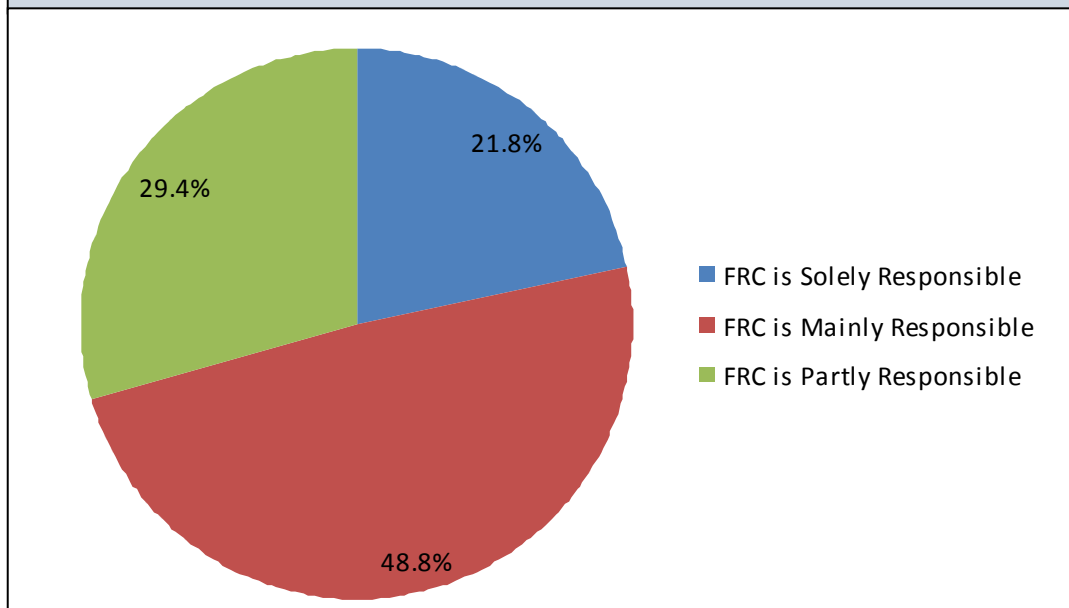


Figure 13: Degree of Responsibility for Community Groups or Initiatives founded by FRCs located outside Dublin in 2010 (N=293)



A significant difference of emphasis exists between newly-established FRCs and well-established FRCs in relation to the type of community groups or initiatives they founded during 2010.

While newly-established FRCs were more likely to found Women’s Groups, Youth Clubs and Sports Groups, well-established FRCs were founding Arts Groups, Youth Clubs and Parent & Toddler Groups.

Figure 14: Community Groups or Initiatives founded most frequently by Newly-Established FRCs in 2010 (N=80)

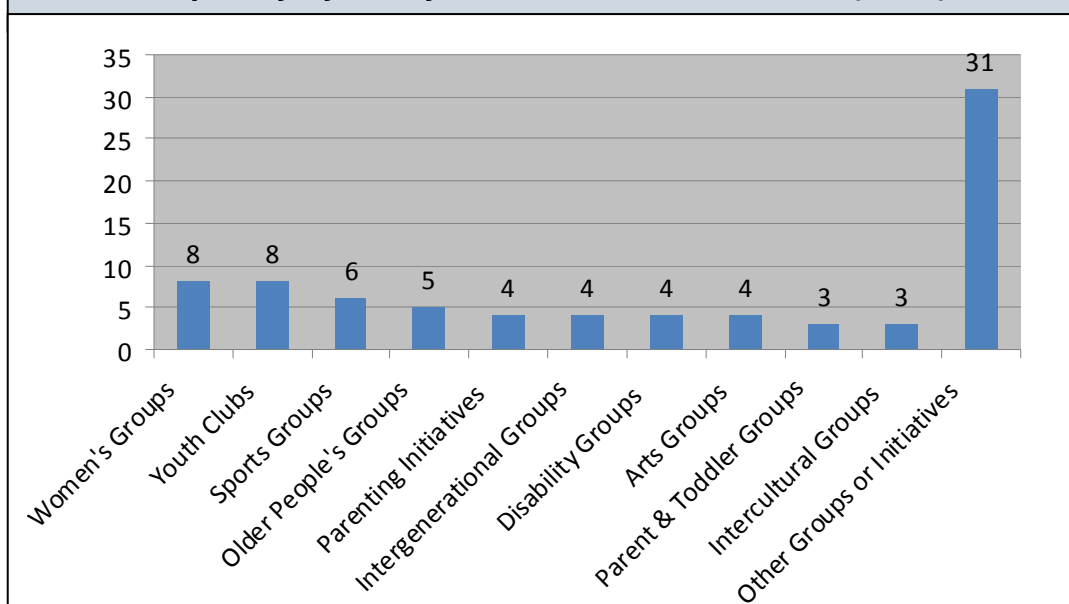
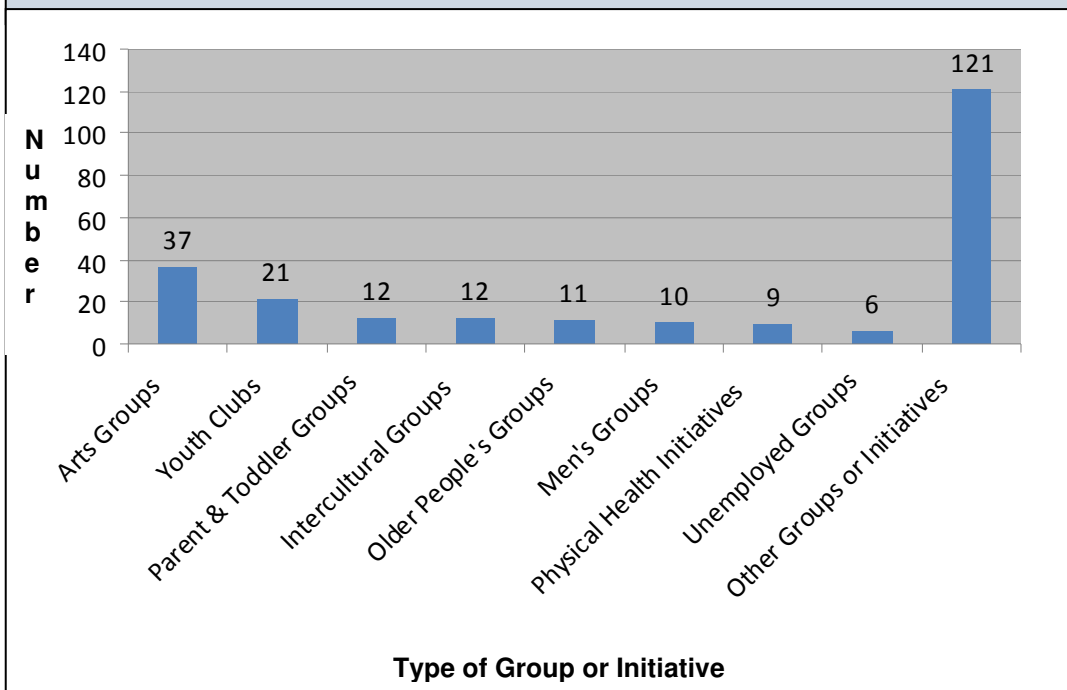


Figure 15: Community Groups or Initiatives founded most frequently by Well-Established FRCs in 2010 (N=241)



Newly-established FRCs are more likely to declare themselves to be 'solely' responsible for the establishment of new community groups or initiatives than those FRCs that are well-established.

Figure 16: Degree of Responsibility for Community Groups or Initiatives founded by Newly-Established FRCs in 2010 (N=80)

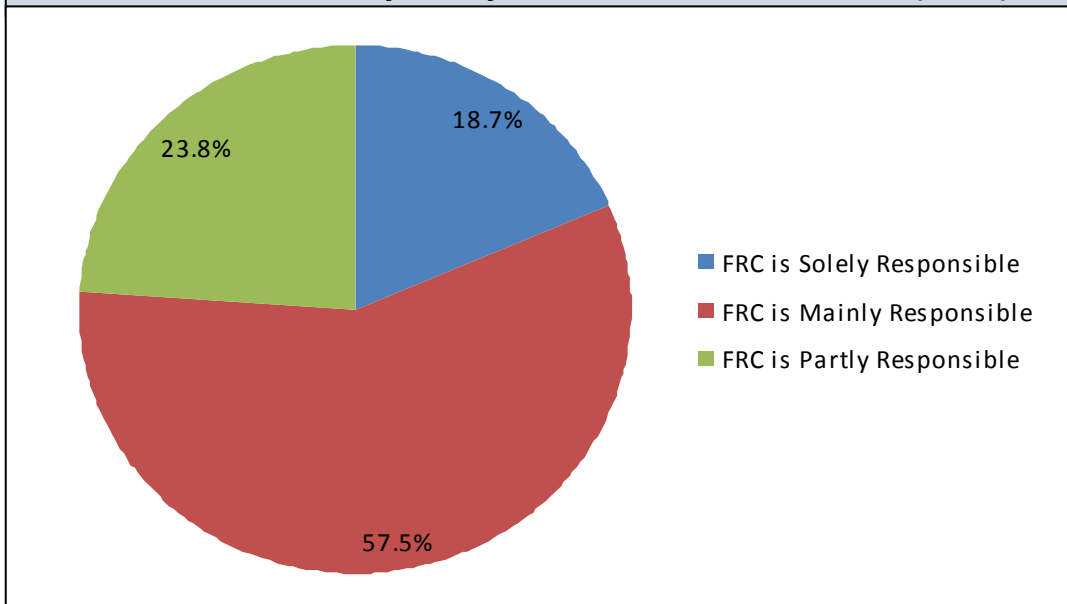
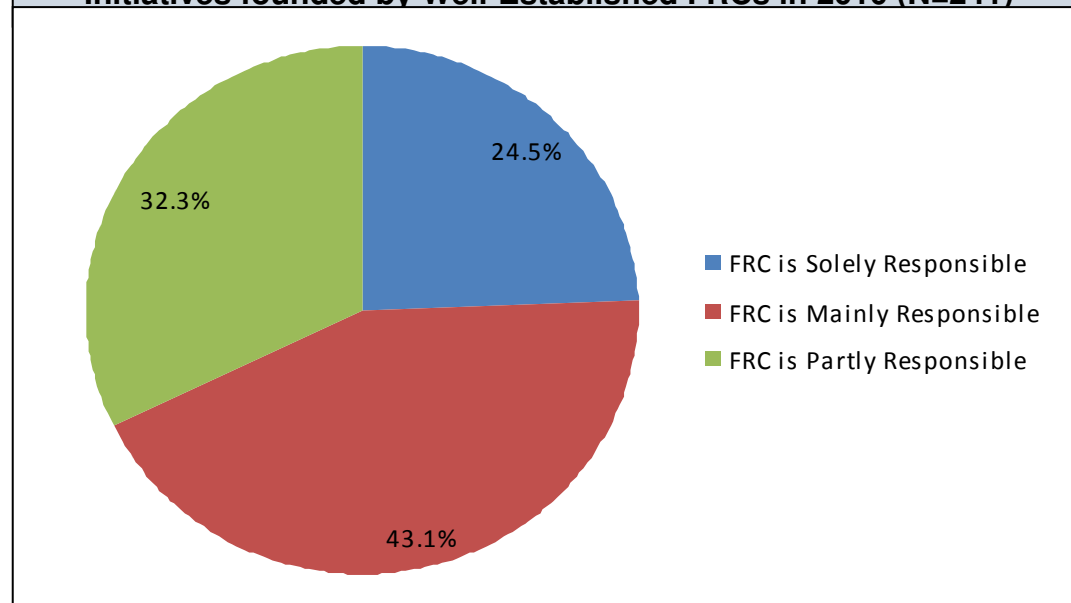


Figure 17: Degree of Responsibility for Community Groups or Initiatives founded by Well-Established FRCs in 2010 (N=241)



While no qualitative data entries reveal why newly-established FRCs are more likely to be ‘mainly’ or ‘partly’ responsible for founding community groups or initiatives than well-established FRCs, this trend may be explained by the need for newly-established FRCs to concentrate on building working relationships with other statutory and voluntary development organisations. For well-established FRCs these relationships may already be developed.

With well-established FRCs having had more time to contribute to their local community infrastructure it is not surprising that these FRCs were less involved during 2010 in terms of founding new community groups and initiatives. On average, well-established FRCs founded 2.7 new community groups or initiatives during this time whereas newly-established FRCs founded an average of 3.8 community groups or initiatives. The advantage of a longer association with a community is reflected in the fact that community groups and initiatives founded by well-established FRCs attracted an average of 33.9 participants whereas the corresponding figure for newly-established FRCs is just 11.9.

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

In bringing a community development approach to family support, the need to empower local individuals, families and communities to articulate their own needs and to work collectively toward addressing these needs is crucial. With this in mind it is interesting to note that, collectively, FRCs directed only 6.06% of their (staff and volunteer) time toward this working method. In contrast, 15.4% of FRC time is directed toward providing opportunities for training and education. This suggests that the emphasis being placed on this working method is quite low.

Consideration of the motivation informing the establishment of one type of group over another raises an interesting point. At the commencement of the 2010 SPEAK cycle, the Voluntary Board of Directors of each FRC prioritised the issues facing their communities. The five issues ranked as highest priorities (after training and education) by Voluntary Boards of Directors were: Employment, Mental Health, Childcare, Drugs and Physical Health.³ However, of the 321 new community groups and initiatives founded during 2010 only 11 were targeted specifically at Unemployed people with a further 3 having an Enterprise focus. Similarly, only 5 new community groups or initiatives were focused on Mental Health with a further 5 focusing on Bereavement and Personal Development. It is unavoidable that issues emerge within communities after FRCs have undertaken their planning exercises. However, with so few new community groups and initiatives (less than a quarter, 24%) addressing the five issues identified as having the highest priority for Volunteer Directors, it does appear that maintaining a clear focus on priority issues may be a challenge for FRCs.

The rationale for founding new community groups and initiatives varies considerably from one case to the next. Many FRCs refer to community groups and initiatives being founded as a result of an approach from the community; others indicate that decisions to found new community groups and initiatives are informed by the local knowledge held within the Voluntary Board of Directors and expressed during formal planning processes.

³ The lack of Training & Education opportunities was given the highest priority by Volunteer Directors. As this issue is dealt with in Section 7 it is excluded from the list presented here.

‘Groups are established on the basis of expressed need by the community. For example the Community Sailing Club was established following an approach from community members who thought there was scope to start a club but didn’t know how to go about it.’ **Downstrands Family Resource Centre, Co. Donegal**

‘In the case of the Resident’s Associations the impetus came from the FRC as there was a general apathy amongst long term tenants. Newer residents were keen to get involved.’ **Knockmay Family Resource Centre, Portlaoise**

For most FRCs, decisions to found a new community response seem to be informed by a mixture of reactive responses and proactive approaches:

‘Most groups develop when a need is identified by individuals in the community who then come to us seeking support. [However] our Afterschools service and Children’s Workshops are in response to...issues that we felt could be tackled by working directly with children and building relationships with their parents.’ **South West Kerry Family Resource Centre**

‘We work by identifying a need in the community, or a need being identified to us, and working with members of the community to meet that need by either establishing a group, a network or an initiative.’ **Family Life Centre, Boyle**

No evidence exists in favour of either a reactive or proactive working model. However, adopting one over the other has clear implications for role of Voluntary Directors within FRCs. Where FRCs are more proactive in identifying local needs Voluntary Directors must fulfil a more directive function. Where FRCs take a more reactive approach Voluntary Directors are more likely to fulfil a role of liaison between the community and the FRC.

When asked to identify factors that helped in developing and coordinating a community response to local needs, respondents highlighted the value of building a profile within local communities and establishing a track record.

‘We now have a high profile in the local area which encourages participation. The After School Club is popular as it is affordable. We do not charge for courses so people know that they will have no money worries.’ **Cara House FRC, Letterkenny**

‘Our premises, office facilities and sensitivity to the needs of these groups (our confidentiality, professionalism, etc.) have played a helpful role.’ **Ballyhaunis FRC**

Above all, FRCs identified support from the local community as being central to their success:

‘Individual community activists with inside knowledge and experience are a key factor in establishing successful groups or initiatives. For example the new Family Support Initiative to support families living with addiction has been made possible by community members who have experienced the issue themselves coming forward to help progress the project.’ **Downstrands Family Resource Centre, Co. Donegal**

As with other areas of FRC activity, the two factors repeatedly identified by FRCs as hindering progress toward the development and coordination of community responses to local needs were lack of finances and lack of staff:

‘Drying up of small grants to support these groups and the lack of any capital to assist, equip or resource their responses is affecting their ability to develop.’ **St. Canice's Community Action Ltd., Kilkenny**

‘Funding restrictions and the knock-on effect of other services being over stretched.’ **Newbridge FRC, Co. Kildare**

‘Limitations of both time and staff. While we were successful in securing a house from Athlone Town Council we are still greatly limited by space.’ **Monsignor Mc Carthy Family Resource Centre, Athlone**

‘Lack of full time/evening staff. It is difficult to be represented at all the meetings we are notified about regarding local issues...due to lack of personnel and a busy morning schedule we cannot avail of all offers.’

Killinarden Family Resource Centre

Section 6 Supporting Existing Community and Voluntary Groups

Alongside working to found new community groups and initiatives, FRCs act to promote self-reliance and autonomy among existing community groups and initiatives. Many of these community groups and initiatives were established before their local FRC; others came after their local FRC but were not instigated by it.

For the most part, as community and voluntary organisations, these groups do not have paid staff. For this reason, accessing qualified and experienced personnel can be of great benefit. In particular, existing community and voluntary groups benefit from assistance with their structures and organisational development, from help to access funding and from advice and support in tackling specific development issues.

Supporting existing community and voluntary groups achieves the following programme objectives adopted in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme (2011)*:

- Being part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
- Being included and participating in society.

Depending on the nature of the work being undertaken by the community or voluntary groups that seeks the support of an FRC, other programme objectives for family support may also be supported. For example, providing assistance to an existing Literacy Group would contribute to the programme objective of supporting active learning. Similarly, assisting a bereavement support group would contribute to the programme objective promoting physical and mental health.

Note on Methodology

Data relating to the supports provided to existing community and voluntary groups concerns the nature and frequency of the supports provided to existing groups and the target groups they represent.

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to providing supports to existing community and voluntary groups
- The number of groups from the community who have been assisted by you, and the nature of that assistance: whether it was related to help with efforts to secure funding, support with organisational or management tasks; or other issues
- The 'target groups' comprising (or being represented by) these groups
- Any changes may be taking place over time in terms of groups being supported by you
- The factors helping the FRC provide these services
- The factors hindering the FRC provide these services
- The longer term impacts perceived by FRCs to follow from this working method (a series of prompt questions are available to help in the facilitation of this discussion).

SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

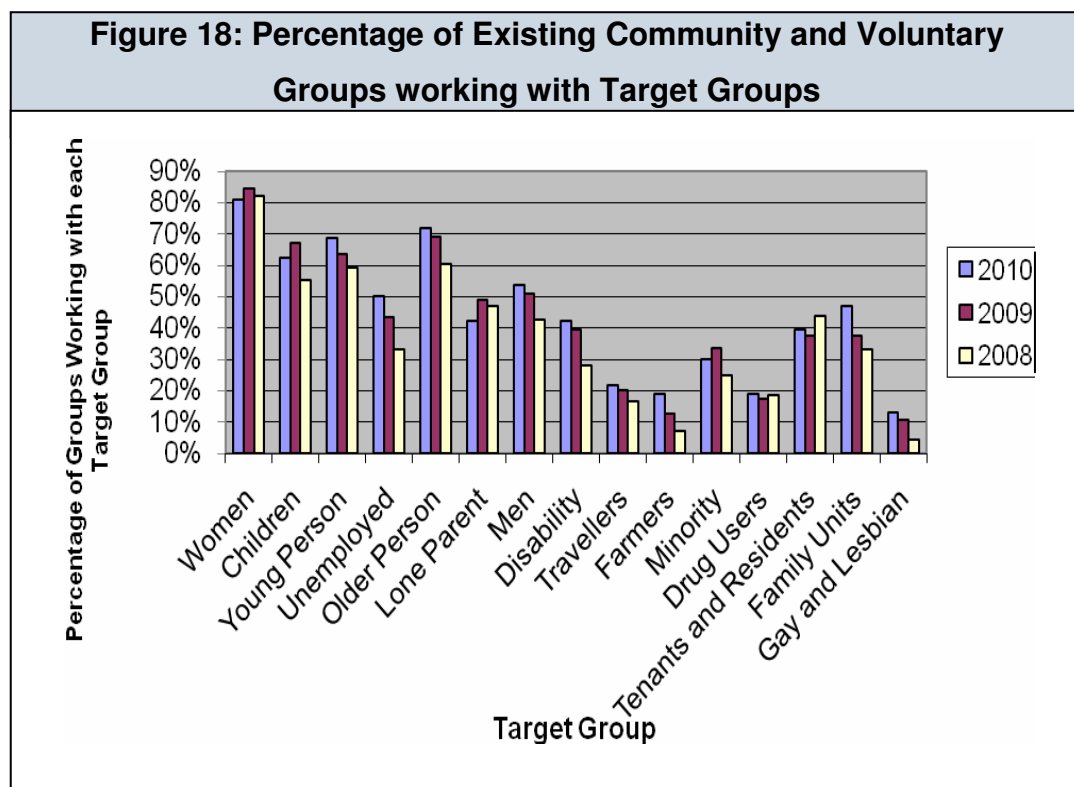
Outputs in relation to Supporting Existing Community and Voluntary Groups

During 2010, over 1,600 existing community and voluntary groups were supported by their local FRCs:

- 752 groups were supported to access funding opportunities
- 452 groups were helped to develop their organisational or management structures
- 437 groups were helped to tackle particular development or policy issues.

These figures represent a significant increase on previous years: the 1,466 existing community and voluntary groups supported during 2009 and the 1,254 during 2008.

Figure 18 demonstrates the variety of target groups with which existing community and voluntary groups are working⁴. Women, Older People, Young People and Children are the target groups with whom existing community and voluntary groups are working most frequently. Lesbian and Gay People, Drug Users, Farmers and Travellers are the target groups with whom existing community and voluntary groups are least likely to work with.



In 2010, existing community and voluntary groups were most likely to work with Women, Older People and Youth. When comparing the data for 2008, 2009 and 2010 it is evident that more existing community and voluntary groups are now working with Family Units, Unemployed and Youth while fewer are working with Tenants and Residents and Lone Parents.

⁴ As many of those with whom these groups are working belong to more than one target group (for example, a person may be both a woman and be unemployed) and as groups may work with more than one target group, percentages here do not tally to 100.

The development issues upon which existing community and voluntary groups are focusing are illustrated in Figure 19.

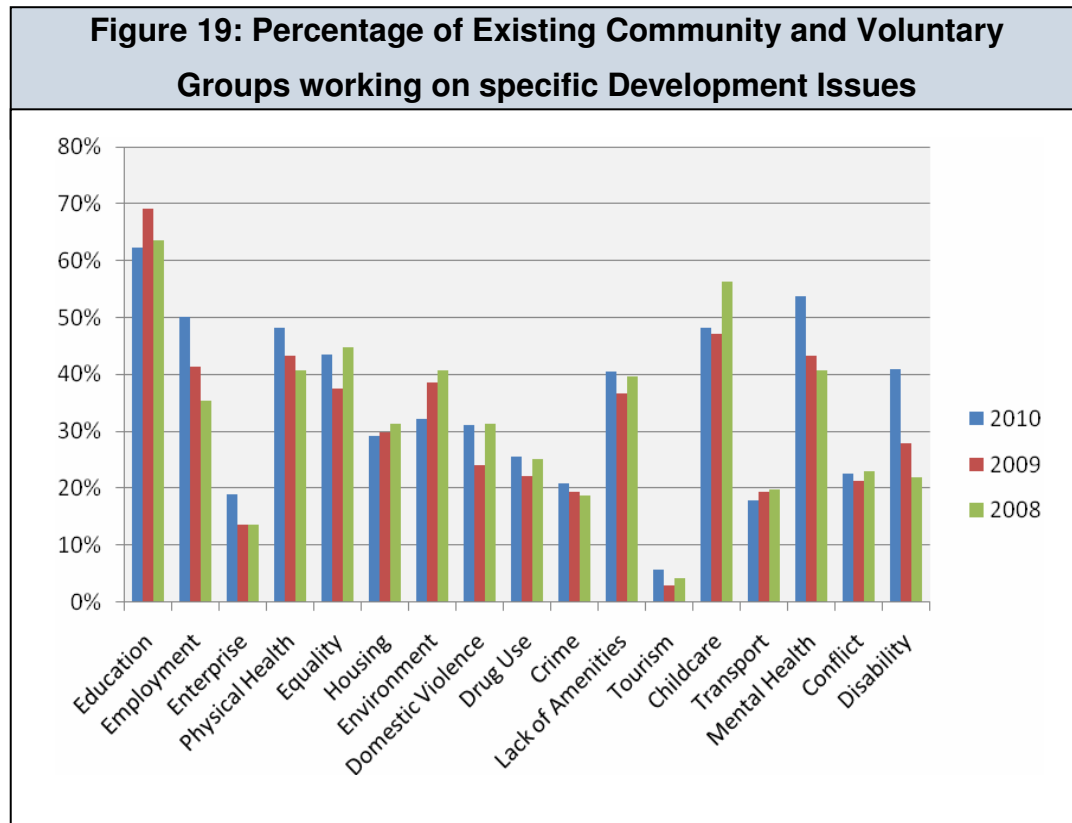


Figure 19 illustrates that during 2010 existing community and voluntary groups were most likely to focus on the Education, Mental Health and Employment.

A higher percentage of community and voluntary groups were focusing on Disability, Mental Health, Employment and Enterprise during 2010 than 2008. Fewer groups were focusing on Childcare and the Environment as developmental issues during 2010 than 2008.

For most FRCs, the outputs of this working method were recorded in terms of groups accessing funding opportunities and groups developing their own capacity to self organise and act:

‘Helping groups has resulted in some groups becoming independent - this means with limited resources you can still be effective. Groups have been

empowered to move on themselves - with the knowledge you are there to support them.' **Hospital FRC, Co. Limerick**

'Through the help of the FRC the LGBT group secured funding from the Community Foundation of Ireland. This enabled them to access training and develop a Terms of Reference for the group. We also assisted the Youth Clubs in submitting a joint application to Pobal and securing funding for youth facilities. The Parent & Toddler group secured funding from the Mayo County Childcare Committee to purchase equipment and organise events for the group. Ballina FRC assisted with this application.' **Ballina Family Resource Centre**

Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Irrespective of where an FRC is located or how long it has been in existence, the support most commonly requested of it by existing community and voluntary groups relates to sourcing funding streams and completing funding applications. However, while an FRC located in Dublin received an average of 4 such requests during 2010, its counterpart outside of Dublin received an average of 7.4 such requests. Similarly, while Dublin based FRCs received an average of 2 requests for support to help develop an existing community or voluntary group's organisational/management structure and 2.4 requests for support relating to a specific development issue the corresponding figures for FRCs located outside of Dublin was 4.5 and 4.3 respectively.

The difference in the frequency of requests for support made by existing community and voluntary groups to newly-established FRCs and well-established FRCs was negligible during 2010. While more well-established FRCs received fractionally more requests than did newly-established FRCs for support with funding applications (an average of 6.85 per FRC compared to an average of 6.7), they also received slightly fewer requests relating to specific development issues (an average of 3.9 per FRC compared to an average of 4.2).

There was no notable variation between Dublin based and non-Dublin based FRCs regarding the development issues with which existing community and voluntary groups were seeking support.

Qualitative data provided by those FRCs who recorded the highest values relating to this working method demonstrate that the value of FRC supports extends beyond local community and voluntary groups to organisations with county-wide and regional remits including sub-structures of the County Development Boards and Regional Networks.

‘We have supported groups in developing their structures and their work - groups such as the Social Inclusion Measures group, Step Forward Group, Limerick Network on Violence against Women and the Youth Network.’

Hospital Family Resource Centre, Co. Limerick

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

During 2010, FRCs committed 7.83% of staff and volunteer time to supporting existing community and voluntary groups. This represents a considerable increase on the commitment of 5.3% of team time committed during 2009. In terms of time committed, FRCs dedicated more time to existing community and voluntary groups than to those community groups and initiatives that they played a part in founding (6.06%).

This figure demonstrates that the dual roles played by FRCs in relation to supporting community activity are regarded as having equal priority; the time committed to developing and maintaining a community response to local issues is being more than matched by the commitment made to supporting existing community activity. As one FRC stated:

‘We see this as a major part of our role as a community based resource. We want to share our skills and knowledge with other groups and support them to thrive.’ **Millennium FRC, Co. Tipperary**

However, it can be difficult for FRCs to gather information on how successful they may be in relation to this work. While some FRCs receive excellent feedback from local groups, others find it more difficult to access this type of information:

‘All 12 groups supported by Breffni accessed and administered funding directly as a result of our work with them.’ **Breffni Community Development Co. Ltd., Co. Leitrim**

‘Of the 30 groups we helped [apply for] funding we only know that 3 groups were successful.’ **Tacú FRC, Ballinrobe**

When considering which factors may have helped FRCs in this area of their work during 2010, most referred to their profile within local communities, their track record with existing community and voluntary groups and their ability to act as a bridge between local groups and mainstream service providers / coordinating bodies:

‘Contact with existing groups has been of benefit, in gaining trust and proving efficiency. As part of our programme we are engaged in a process of nurturing formal and informal groups and bringing them together as structures. [Our] contacts with other agencies relevant to local concerns have [enabled] access for groups to...available resources.’ **Clones FRC**

‘We have the training and resources required that we can deliver [to existing groups] at short notice. Once we develop a piece of training we file it away and can adapt it to the needs of different groups and individuals.’ **Three Drives FRC, Tipperary**

‘The level of experience among our staff teams and having a consistent staff team who have been with the organisation for a number of years and have become specialised in the areas of health, housing, education, arts and childcare is an important factor.’ **Fatima Groups United**

Factors identified by FRCs as hindering their ability to support existing community and voluntary groups during 2010 centred on the difficulty meeting demand with

current staff levels and the increased level of demand due to the closure of other organisations that were previously supporting community and voluntary groups:

‘The increased work load and footfall due to the closing of the local Community Development Project (CDP) and the economic climate has meant that we need to rely more on students and volunteers in order to maintain the work load.’ **Ballina Family Resource Centre**

‘The hours of the Outreach Worker are currently funded part-time and this limits [his/her] availability to support and develop local community groups.’
Hill Street FRC

Increased demand for this work has led some FRCs to consider introducing new systems to enable them to satisfy local needs:

‘We should develop a more systematic way of disseminating relevant information to local groups.’ **Downstrands Family Resource Centre**

Section 7 Providing Education and Training Opportunities

The provision of education and training is a core activity for many FRCs. FRCs either directly provide, or arrange for the provision of, education and training opportunities to local individuals, families and communities.

Opportunities to access education and training have been classified into three distinct categories. These are:

- Training (referring to vocational courses that involve the development of work-related skills)
- Education (referring to learning in a broader sense; this may include formal and informal learning)
- Self Development (referring to courses in personal development, awareness and assertiveness training).

Providing education and training opportunities achieves the following programme objectives as adopted in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011):

- Supported in active learning
- Included and participating in society
- Economically secure (vocational training opportunities only).

Note on Methodology

Data collected relating to the provision of education and training concerns the nature of education and training opportunities provided and the number of people completing courses.

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections. All data relating to the identified impact of this work is entered in a facilitated meeting of Voluntary Directors.

Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to providing education and training opportunities
- The number of people completing courses (training, education or self development)
- The 'target groups' availing of these opportunities
- Any changes that may be taking place over time in relation to this work
- The factors helping the FRC provide these opportunities
- The factors hindering the FRC provide these opportunities
- The longer term impacts perceived by FRCs to follow from this working method (a series of prompt questions are available to help in the facilitation of this discussion).

SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

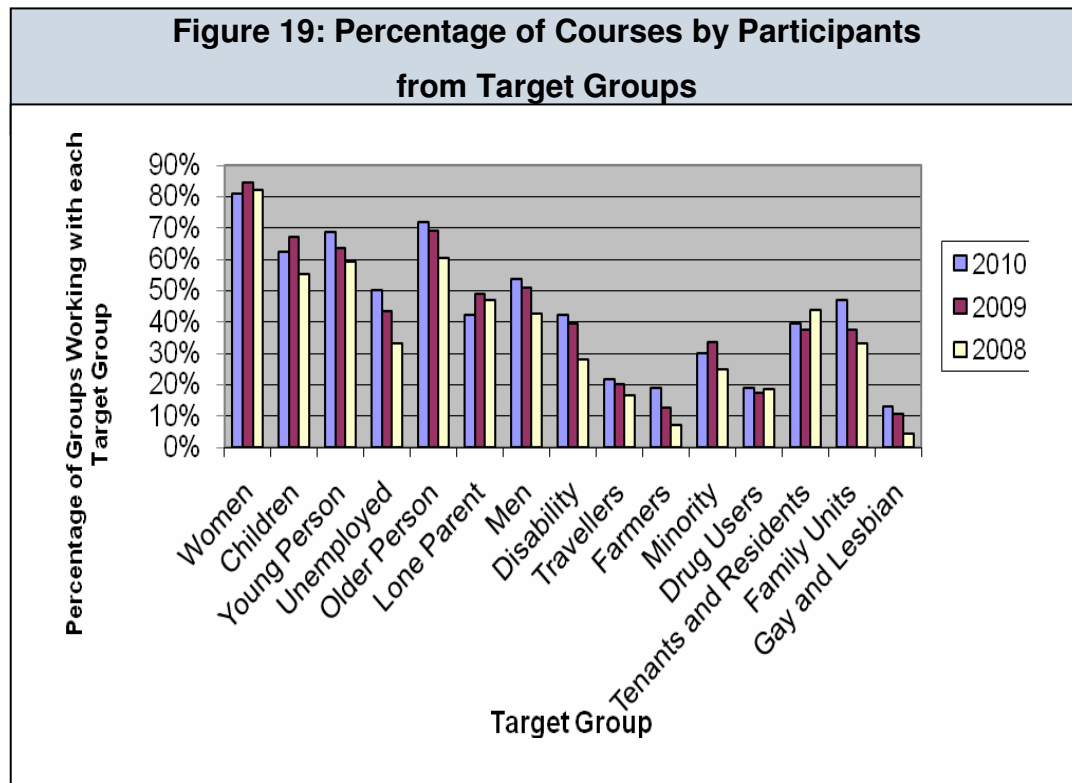
Outputs in relation to Providing Education and Training Opportunities

During 2010, FRCs have been responsible for significant outputs in relation to training and education:

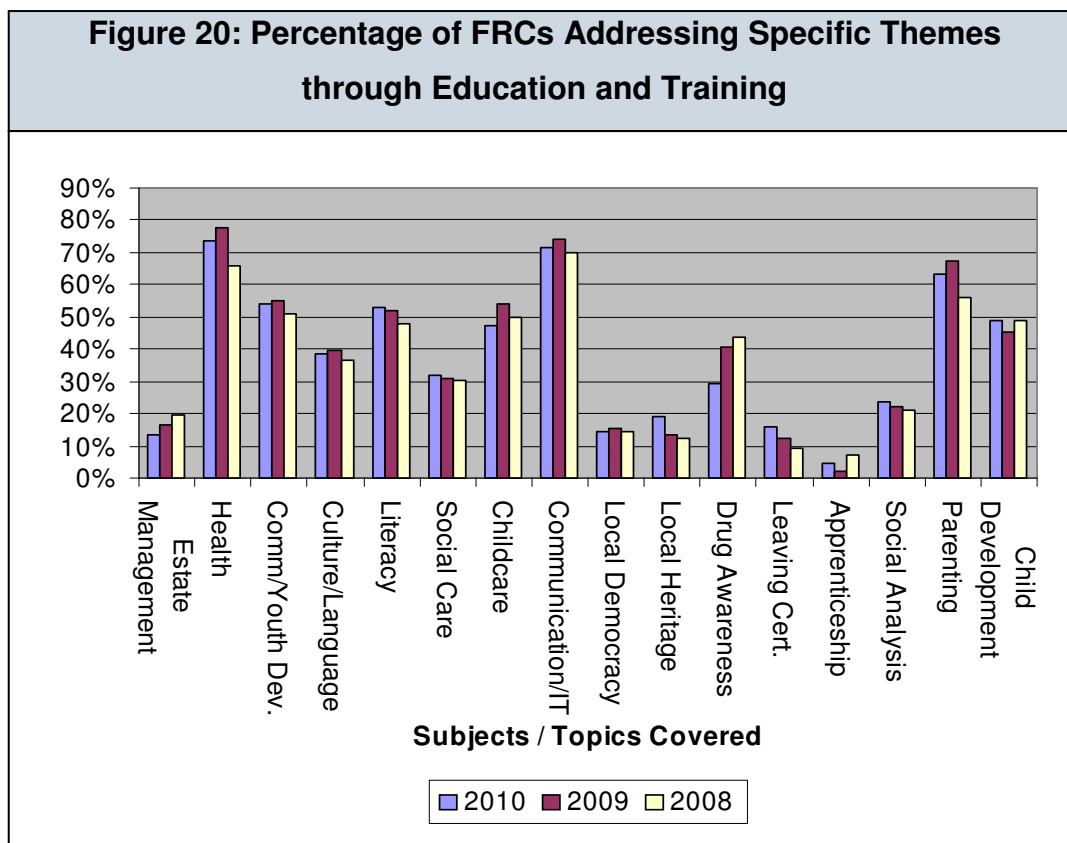
- 14,331 people completed education courses
- 10,082 people completed training courses
- 6,044 people completed self development courses.

To place these outputs in a national context, Aontas, the National Adult Learning Organisation, estimates that there are currently 'approximately 200,000 adults involved in formal, further education programmes. These are adults availing of education through local VECs (including adult literacy, community education, Youthreach, VTOS, Back to Education Initiative, Post Leaving Certificate programmes and Senior Traveller Training Centres)...and a further 30,000 adults are estimated to take part in non-formal community education' (2010 n.p.).

Figure 19 illustrates that those target groups most likely to participate in courses delivered by FRCs are Women, who are represented on 81% of all courses, and Older People, who are represented on 72% of all courses. The target groups least likely to be represented on courses delivered by FRCs are Gay and Lesbian people, Drug Users and Farmers who are represented on 13%, 19% and 19% of courses respectively. This data also illustrates that the participation rates of Family Units, Young People, Farmers and the Unemployed improved most between 2009 and 2010.



When considering the content of courses delivered by FRCs, Figure 20 demonstrates that the most frequent topics with a vocational application covered in courses delivered by FRCs include IT / Communications, Literacy and Community & Youth Development. The most frequent topics covered by broader education courses are Health, Parenting and Child Development.



Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

As a working method, Providing Education and Training Opportunities occupies more FRC staff and volunteer time than any other. It accounts for 18.77% of staff and volunteer time in Dublin FRCs and 14.76% of staff and volunteer time for those FRCs located outside Dublin. This greater investment in time made by Dublin FRCs is reflected in greater output in terms of people completing courses. Whereas the average Dublin FRC sees 203 people complete education courses, 99 people complete training courses and 57 people complete self development courses their counterparts outside Dublin recorded 115 people, 90 people and 55 people respectively.

FRCs would appear to grow into this working method. Newly-established FRCs commit considerably less time, 10.4%, to providing education and training than do well-established FRCs, 16.1%. When adjusted to reflect the difference in time committed between newly-established and well-established FRCs, there is no considerable difference in terms of outputs.

Kilorglin Family Resource Centre recorded the highest value in terms of people completing education courses. During 2010, this FRC saw 960 people complete education courses. The FRC cites the importance of building links with mainstream providers of education:

‘The FRC works closely with FAS, I.T. Tralee, Kerry Education Services and South Kerry Development Partnership. These links are huge factors in sourcing resources to provide education and training.’ **Kilorglin Family Resource Centre**

Concerning the number of people completing training courses, Newpark Close FRC recorded the highest value, 2,182 people. Of these, 2,100 completed training in Information Technology. The success of this FRC in providing IT training has led to its employment of 2 full time staff members (delivering FETAC levels 3 and 4 programmes to Long Term Unemployed men) and a part-time IT Team Leader to support trainees through their courses. The impact of this work has extended beyond the individual trainees; the Newpark Close FRC Voluntary Directors have noted higher levels of participation across a range of community activities including the FRC’s management structures.

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

As mentioned in Section 5, at the commencement of the 2010 SPEAK cycle the Voluntary Board of Directors of each FRC prioritised the issues facing their communities. Collectively, FRCs ranked the need for access to education and training opportunities as the highest priority. The time committed to this working method reflects this fact. Furthermore, the outputs generated by FRCs in relation to this working method suggest that the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme is now a major provider and facilitator of education and training opportunities. However, apart from sporadic references found within the qualitative data provided by FRCs, there is no clear indication of how many of the courses currently on offer are accredited and to what level.

When asked to identify factors that helped in providing education and training opportunities during 2010, FRCs consistently referred to three themes: a knowledge of what type of courses local communities wanted; a good relationship with organisations capable of funding the delivery of courses (the Vocational Educational Committees were consistently singled out as valued worker partners); the ability to offer opportunities at an affordable price.

‘Having FETAC status allows flexible training. Delivering education and training programmes that are demand-led allows us to meet the needs of people who have lost employment thus allowing them to re-train. The affordability of our programmes and the opportunity to spread the cost over the duration of the programmes appeals to those who are unemployed or under financial pressure.’ **St. Matthew’s Family Centre, Dublin**

‘It was almost a surprise how successful we were in obtaining support and funding from the VEC and the local Partnership. While we did not get every application approved, we were able to put on a very good programme of training and education. Locally word of mouth is invaluable as a source of bringing in new people.’ **Quarryvale FRC**

‘[The] growing reputation of our FRC as a major informal community based agency providing wide ranging education opportunities to children, adults, the unemployed, senior citizens and parents is a big factor in our success in this area in 2010.’ **St. Canice's Community Action Ltd., Kilkenny**

‘A bottom - up approach enables clients to identify needs and bring them to our attention. They have confidence in our centre to help them meet their needs.’ **Mohill Family Support Centre Ltd.**

A lack of funding was the most common factor identified as hindering FRCs in the delivery of educational and training opportunities.

‘Funding and available space in the building.’ **Newbridge FRC, Co. Kildare**

Many FRCs also made reference to limitations resulting from their premises:

‘[Our] facility is too small. We have to rent additional rooms to facilitate our courses and activities. This increases the costs associated with providing these services. Next year, we hope to provide all our courses on-site as we have moved into bigger premises. This will reduce the cost of the courses/activities.’ **Donegal Family Resource Centre Ltd.**

‘Difficulties have arisen due to lack of space and funding, the centre is used 6 days per week and we have found it difficult to accommodate all the courses we would have liked to have provided.’ **Dunmanway FRC, Co. Cork**

The lack of a broadband infrastructure in rural areas was noted by one FRC:

‘Not having broadband in this area meant that we could not work with FAS to provide much needed IT training in this area.’ **St Johnston & Carrigans FRC, Co. Donegal**

Section 8 Providing Information and Advice

FRCs provide points of contact and access to information for the most excluded sections of society. Information concerning the range of services and development options available locally can be obtained from FRCs. Advice on accessing rights and entitlements is also extended.

Along with providing information to individuals, families and community and voluntary groups, FRCs also act as a focal point for onward referrals to mainstream service providers.

Providing information and advice achieves the programme objective of having an inclusive and participative society as adopted in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011).

The kind of information and advice provided by FRCs may also lead to the promotion of other programme objectives. For example, providing information relating to a family's social welfare entitlements may contribute to achieving the programme objective of economic security. Similarly, advising a family member of a training opportunity may advance the programme objective of supporting active learning.

Note on Methodology

Data gathered relating to the provision of information and advice concerns the number of people who received information and advice rather than the number of times people may have received information and advice. A distinction is made between people who were given information and advice directly and those that were referred onward to other agencies or services.

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to providing information and advice
- The number of people advised or given information (directly by FRC team)
- People advised by another service or organisation using FRC premises, for example through a MABS clinic, are not included in these figures (data relating to the number of times FRC premises are made available to other services and community/voluntary groups is presented in Section 10)
- The number of people referred onwards by FRC team to other organisations or services
- Methods used by FRCs to communicate with the community
- The specific target groups (where known) requesting information and advice
- The factors helping the FRC provide this service
- The factors hindering the FRC provide this service
- The longer term impacts perceived by FRCs to follow from this working method (a series of prompt questions are available to help in the facilitation of this discussion).

SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

Outputs in relation to Providing Information and Advice

In total, FRC staff and volunteers directly provided 136,675 people with information or advice during 2010. This is equivalent to an average of just over 5 people receiving information and advice from each FRC every day.⁵ A further 56,030 people were referred onward to other organisations or services.

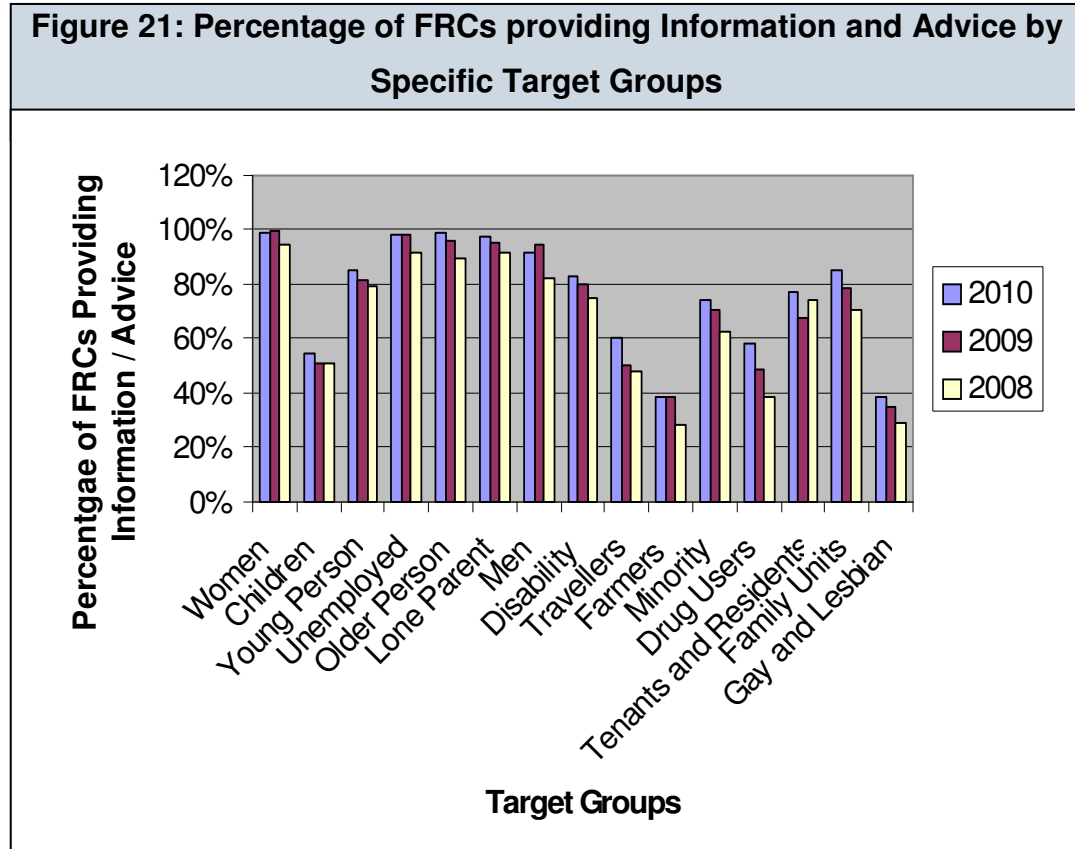
These outputs represent a 9% decrease in the number of people accessing information and a 26% decrease in referrals on the 2009 figures.

Figure 21 illustrates the percentage of FRCs providing information and advice to each target group. This data demonstrates that Older People, Women, Lone Parents and

⁵ Where 252 working days constitute a year.

Unemployed are accessing information and advice from virtually all FRCs.

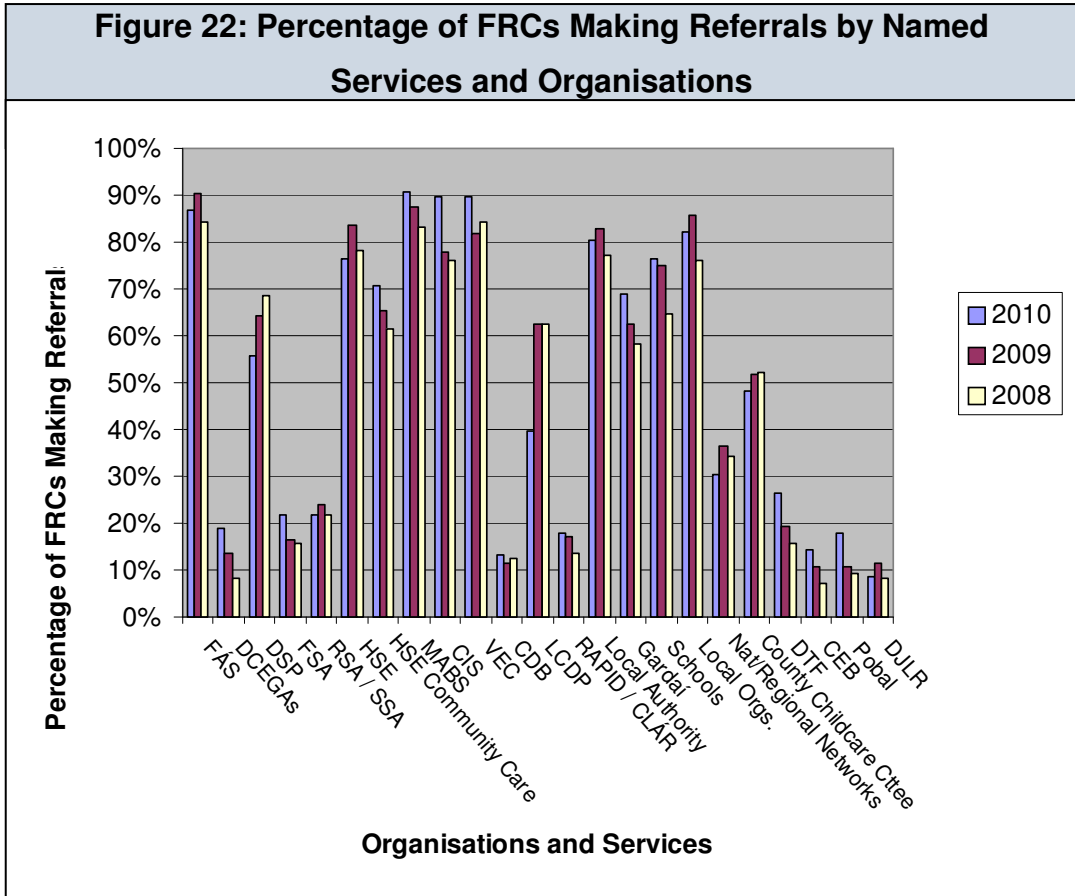
Unsurprisingly, the percentage of FRCs providing information and advice to Gay and Lesbians, Farmers and Children is far lower. Between 2009 and 2010 the percentage of FRCs providing information and advice to Travellers, Drug Users, Tenants and Residents and Family Units experienced the most significant increase.



In relation to the 56,030 referrals made during 2010, FRC staff and volunteers were asked to identify which services and organisations they were making referrals to.

Figure 22 indicates that the greatest percentage of FRCs were referring people to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, Citizens Information Services, Vocational Educational Committees and FÁS. The percentage of FRCs referring onward to Citizen’s Information Centres experienced the most noteworthy increase between 2009 and 2010; while the percentage of FRCs referring people to the new Local and Community Development Programme experienced the most significant decrease.⁶

⁶ The Local and Community Development Programme is an amalgam of the Community Development Programme and the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme. The comparison made here relates to the percentage of FRCs referring people to the CDP and LDSIP during 2009 and the percentage of FRCs referring people to the LCDP during 2010.



Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Given the weight that all FRCs attach to the strength of their connections within local communities, it is not surprising that well-established FRCs tended to deliver higher outputs in terms of providing information and advice than did newly-established FRCs. The average well-established FRC provided 1,395 people with information and referred a further 547 people onward. By contrast, the average newly-established FRCs provided 594 people with information and advice and referred 350 people onward. It is also the case that newly-established FRCs tend to refer a greater proportion of people onward to other organisations and services than do well-established FRCs (the ratio of people provided directly with information or advice to those referred onward being 2.5:1 in well-established FRCs and 1.7:1 in newly-established FRCs). This would suggest that the more established an FRC is, the greater the level of knowledge acquired by its staff and the higher the likelihood that information requests be handled directly.

When comparing the outputs of Dublin based FRCs to those FRCs located outside Dublin it becomes clear that Dublin FRCs, on average, provide considerably more people with information and advice (1,697 people) and make a greater number of onward referrals (714 people) than do those located outside of Dublin (1,147 people and 466 people respectively). This is achieved with a very modest increase in time committed to this work. While Dublin based FRCs commit 8.45% of their time to this working method, those FRCs located outside Dublin commit 8% of their time.

There is a considerable contrast between the time committed by individual FRCs to this working method. For some FRCs, providing information and advice accounts for a substantial amount of staff and volunteer time. Listowel Family Resource Centre dedicates 26% of staff and volunteer time to providing information and advice; Mill Family Resource Centre dedicates 25.8%; Duagh Family Centre commits 25%; Castlebar le Chéile FRC commits 24.9%. On the other hand, some FRCs have not committed significant time to this working method. Dunmanway FRC dedicated just 1.6% of staff and volunteer time to providing information and advice; St. Brigid's Community Centre committed 2.6%; Southend Family Resource Centre committed 2.7%.

FRCs who made a markedly high time commitment to this working method did not elaborate on how this came to be. However, some FRCs that invested comparatively little time to this working method did make the following comments:

‘The cut backs in staff hours have meant that the newsletter has only been produced once this year. The centre being off the beaten track affects whether people drop in or not.’ **Southend Family Resource Centre, Wexford**

‘Although we have greater capacity within the team we have seen the service expand and make even more demands on staff time...it can be a challenge juggling the work. It might be useful to identify a team member whose focus is on providing information in different formats. This is something we will consider.’ **Dunmanway FRC, Co. Cork**

The relationship between the time spent on this working method and the outputs achieved by FRCs is not consistent. Those FRCs that achieved the highest level of

output did so with rather standard investments of time. Mullaghmatt Cortolvin F.R.C. provided information and advice to 12,996 people while dedicating only 11.9% of staff and volunteer time to this task. Similarly, St. Brigid's FCC provided information and advice to 7,560 people and referred a further 3,024 people onward for a commitment of 15% of staff and volunteer time.

Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC identified good working relationships as key to the development of its reputation as an information centre:

‘We have developed a good relationship with a key number of stakeholders who in turn work well with us. This has resulted in the project being seen as a key place for information and support. We have expanded outside our target area.’ **Mullaghmatt Cortolvin F.R.C., Co Monaghan**

Effective public relations work was cited by St. Brigid's FCC as helping in the achievement of these outputs:

‘Local P.R. took place through a number of events which highlighted the role of St. Brigid's and the range of family support programmes and community initiatives being run through the centre...Any event or activity delivered by the FRC is promoted locally through local press and radio and through relevant networks.’ **St. Brigid's FCC, Waterford**

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

The benefit of having a high profile within local communities is cited repeatedly by FRCs as a major factor contributing to the outputs achieved in relation to this working method. Ninety percent of FRCs now distribute a community newsletter and over 66% have an internet presence. The potential of the local press, along with emerging forms of communication such as virtual social networking sites, is also recognised by FRCs. To encourage people to call into FRCs to seek information and advice, people need to be aware that this service is available.

FRCs have proved to be resourceful and innovative when opening a line of communication with their communities:

‘We reviewed the objectives of our newsletter and, as a result, changed the focus from an A4 newsletter containing photos of things that had happened, delivered to families through the schools, to an A5 information leaflet of forthcoming events and courses delivered to every household through An Post.’ **Downstrands Family Resource Centre, Co. Donegal**

Another strategy implemented by the same FRC:

‘Installation of leaflet holders at the GP surgeries and the Credit Unions in Ardara and Glenties.’ **Downstrands Family Resource Centre, Co. Donegal**

‘[We use a] web texting facility which is free.’ **CONNECT Family Resource Centre, Drogheda**

Many FRCs noted that, to be effective, public relations work needs to be substantiated by delivering a quality service. The value of ‘word of mouth’ within communities was emphasised:

‘The increase in individuals and groups using the premises...promotes the FRC through word of mouth which has proven to be a very effective P.R. method.’ **Ballina Family Resource Centre**

‘[We use a] newsletter, local press, bulletins, text messaging. Trust from the community, proven track record for efficiency and discretion help as does the non-judgemental approach [of staff] and ease of access [to centre]. Word of mouth is the primary advertiser and much more powerful than self publicity.’ **Clones FRC**

The value of having a strong working relationship with organisations whose main function is information provision is also mentioned by many FRCs:

‘The citizens’ information service has been instrumental in our ability to provide accurate information to people.’ **Bridgeways FRC, Co. Longford**

Section 9 Hosting Counselling Services

Through hosting counselling services, FRCs offer individuals and families access to affordable, supportive and non-judgemental professional assistance within their local communities. Counselling sessions are not directly delivered by FRC staff; instead FRCs act as a link between communities and professional counsellors by hosting, promoting and managing the funding of these services. In the main, counselling provided within FRCs comprises sessions focusing on relationships, bereavement and separation.

In addition to a professional counselling service, FRCs also provide a welcoming, sympathetic and secure environment for local individuals and families. Such an environment is conducive to imparting informal one-to-one support (or “cup of tea support” as it is commonly described by FRC staff). This refers to welcoming and listening to individuals and families who are looking for someone to talk to in a confidential and non-judgemental atmosphere. This informal ‘one-to-one support’ is not a substitute for the services provided by professional counsellors.

Hosting counselling achieves the programme objective of improving the health of families, both physically and mentally.

Note on Methodology

Data gathered relating to the hosting of counselling services concerns the number of people benefiting from counselling services within FRCs and the nature of counselling sessions delivered. Information concerning the numbers availing of informal one-to-one support is also gathered here.

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of this work, FRC staff do not have access to the appointment schedules of counsellors. To complete this section of SPEAK, the relevant quantitative data was requested from counsellors delivering the service and inputted during the SPEAK Outputs team meeting. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to hosting counselling services
- The number of people accessing counselling services hosted by the FRC
- The number of counselling sessions delivered under the headings 'relationship', 'bereavement', 'separation' and 'other'
- The number of people referred to external counselling services by FRCs
- The number of people accessing informal one-to-one support within FRCs
- The factors helping the FRC provide this service
- The factors hindering the FRC provide this service
- The longer term impacts perceived by FRCs to follow from this working method (a series of prompt questions are available to help in the facilitation of this discussion).

SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

Outputs in relation to Hosting Counselling Services

A total of 5,587 people received counselling through an FRC during 2010. This is a notable increase on the 2009 figure of 5,389 people.

Over 20,000 individual counselling sessions were delivered during the year. This figure breaks down into:

- 9,337 sessions concerning 'Relationship'
- 3,849 sessions concerning 'Bereavement'
- 3,014 sessions concerning 'Separation'
- 4,531 sessions concerning 'other' topics.

The value to individuals and families of having access to counselling services is recorded by many FRCs:

‘Two Counsellors operate from the Centre. Feedback...indicated at least 30 clients went on to access other supports at the FRC, e.g. education and personal development courses. The Counselling service at the FRC is of huge benefit to the local community.’ **Killorglin Family Resource Centre**

The features of the service hosted by FRCs that were identified as maximising impact for individuals, families and communities were affordability, local access and the speed with which FRCs can deliver (especially in rural areas with few local services).

‘Counselling can be very expensive, and by providing an affordable service (€5 per session) more people are able to avail of the service than could normally afford counselling.’ **Cherry Orchard F.R.C. Ltd.**

‘This area has a historic transport deficit and the local "on your doorstep" service offered by the FRC, supported by the FSA, assists in alleviating that waiting period and the anguish experienced by those waiting on appointments.’ **Raphoe Family Resource Centre, Co. Donegal**

‘Having been successful in gaining a counselling grant in 2010 the community have availed of the service. This has been invaluable in that a GP referral for a counsellor can take up to two years and our service can see a client meet a counsellor on the same day if required.’ **The Forge FRC, Co. Donegal**

Alongside those who accessed professional counselling services through their FRCs, a further 14,263 people benefited from informal one-to-one support. The nature of this work is captured by the following data entries:

‘We do not offer counselling supports...[but] people sometimes just call in and like to unload, to have someone to listen to them, we have and always will have an open door policy, whereby anyone can call in for a chat or to be listened too.’ **Raheen Community Development Group Ltd., Co. Wexford**

‘One to one support has helped [people] set up groups such as scouts, join courses, access information and improve their family life. Informal support...leads to less isolation and breakdown of barriers which is what we are all about - it is invaluable.’ **Hospital Family Resource Centre, Co.**

Limerick

Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Of the 106 FRCs that contributed data to this report, 75 host a professional counselling service.

On average, each FRC commits 4.64% of staff and volunteer time to this working method. This small commitment of time reflects the ‘facilitative’ role of FRCs; instead of delivering sessions, FRCs oversee the service. Rather than delivering sessions directly, FRCs may access funding, provide suitable space, identify counsellors and handle promotion and referral. Of the 75 FRCs involved in this work, 26 dedicate just 1%, or less, of staff and volunteer time to hosting counselling services.

However, some FRC teams have invested a significant amount of time in hosting a counselling service. During 2010, the Family Life Centre committed 38.6% of staff and volunteer time to this working method; Duagh Family Centre committed 21% and St. Brigid’s FCC committed 15%.

To some extent, the disparity of time invested by FRCs is reflected in outputs achieved; the three FRCs that invested most time were among the four FRCs who recorded the highest level of output. However, there is no true correlation between the time committed by FRCs to this working method and the outputs achieved. Those FRCs achieving the highest outputs relating to this working method were St. Brigid’s FCC (5,530 sessions), Family Life Centre (2,404 sessions), School St. FRC (1,509 sessions) and Duagh Family Centre (1,200 sessions). The contribution of St. Brigid’s FCC equates to 26% of the total programme output for 2010. The average FRC that hosts a counselling service was responsible for 276 sessions during 2010.

The geographical location of FRCs does not make them more, or less, likely to be involved in the hosting of counselling services. Those located within and without Dublin are equally as likely to provide this service. However, FRCs located in Dublin are more likely to host counselling sessions relating to bereavement and separation than are those located outside Dublin, whereas relationship counselling is in greater demand among FRCs located outside the capital.

Although the time committed by newly-established and well-established FRCs to hosting counselling services is similar (4.58% and 4.64% respectively), the more experienced FRCs have recorded considerably higher outputs during 2010. Whereas an average 22 people received two sessions each in newly-established FRCs, the average well-established FRC hosted four sessions for 57 people.

In relation to the provision of informal one-to-one (“cup of tea”) support, the contribution of St. Brigid’s FCC is again notable. St. Brigid’s FCC provided informal one-to-one support to 1,645 people during 2010. Other FRCs who recorded high values relating to the outputs achieved during 2010 include Focus Family Resource Centre (1200 people) and Le Chéile FRC Mallow (869 people).

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

The difference between hosting a professional counselling service and providing informal one-to-one support is well recognised by FRCs. In providing informal one-to-one support, staff need to carefully confine discussion to topics where they can make a constructive contribution. Staff need to be well prepared to act appropriately when discussion suggests that intervention by a suitably qualified person might be required.

‘All but the simplest counselling is referred on the basis that we are not qualified and there is a risk of causing a negative impact.’ **Easkey Community Family Resource Centre**

‘Staff often offer informal one to one support to individuals with various issues such as bereavement, separation, family break down, etc. This is a vital

service as very often people do not need a full counselling service. However for the people who need...a professional qualified counsellor, we were able to provide three hours one-to-one counselling weekly in conjunction with [a] professional counselling service.’ **Mountview Family Resource**

‘The FRC is often the first point of contact for families in crisis situations. Staff provide one to one support to users of the centre and referrals are made to outside agencies. Support is usually in the form of an informal chat but on occasion has resulted in referral to counselling or other support services.’

Arden View Community & Family Resource Centre, Co. Offaly

Some FRCs have undertaken training to ensure that they are properly equipped to recognise the point at which informal one-to-one support is no longer useful or is becoming potentially destructive:

‘Staff are trained in listening skills and these are regularly used to help people discuss their difficulties or needs so that we can then provide appropriate information, refer or begin to look at [their situation] and what might be done.’

South West Kerry FRC

As well as recognising the limits of informal one-to-one support, FRCs also note the time consuming nature of this work. Affording people the time to discuss issues that are sensitive and often deeply personal must place demands on staff time.

When commenting on this working method, FRCs identified a number of factors that helped in achieving output and maximising impact. Chief among these is access to funding and to suitably qualified counsellors along with the suitability of FRC premises to host such a service. The absence of these factors was highlighted by FRCs as hindering their work:

‘Our counselling service did not operate in 2010 as we did not have access to a Counsellor.’ **Ballyhaunis FRC**

‘Our existing facilities have curtailed our ability to deliver counselling and support services in-house due to lack of suitable space and confidentiality. Access to local professional counselling services is limited [but] we continue to explore ways of addressing this situation.’ **Dunfanaghy Community & Family Resource Ltd., Co. Donegal**

Some FRCs have demonstrated considerable innovation in overcoming the unsuitable nature of their premises. This has involved using additional infrastructure available locally or in developing working partnerships with other FRCs:

‘Use of space in local Pastoral Centre allows for the provision of a reduced-cost counselling service.’ **Balally Family Resource Centre Ltd.**

‘We have the use of a house which allows us to facilitate counselling outside our own building.’ **Solas Resource Centre, Co. Galway**

‘[There is an] FRC in Newbridge that provides counselling and have taken referrals from us.’ **Curragh Pride FRC, Co. Kildare**

Section 10 Providing Front-of-house and Administrative Supports

Given that FRCs are located within local communities they provide a focal point for community activity. A key characteristic of FRCs is that they provide administrative supports and meeting spaces for individuals, families and community groups.

Administrative supports typically take the form of access to computers and related information and communication technology including phones, photocopiers and fax machines.

Many FRCs also provide meeting spaces for families and community groups.

Meeting spaces are also used by other service providers to deliver services on an outreach basis within local communities.

Providing front of house administrative supports and meeting space to local families and to local community groups achieves the following programme objectives for family support:

- Part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
- Included and participating in society.

The use of FRCs' meeting space by mainstream service providers on an outreach basis, or 'clinic' style, contributes to the ability of these organisations to deliver their own programmes. For example, using FRCs enables the Money Advice and Budgeting Service to access clients thus contributing to the programme objective of creating economic security. Similarly, FRCs facilitating the Garda Síochána contributes to their work in bringing about the programme objective of having secure immediate and physical environments.

Note on Methodology

Data relating to the provision of front-of-house administrative supports concerns the number of times that these supports have been accessed; not the number of people accessing these supports. Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur.

Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Data is requested in relation to:

- Time committed to providing front-of-house administrative supports
- The number of visits made by individuals to use front-of-house administrative supports
- The number of visits made by community groups to use the front-of-house administrative supports
- The number of times other organisations used the FRC's premises to hold meetings or outreach clinics
- The specific target groups (where known) using the front-of-house administrative supports
- The key development issues being addressed by other organisations using the FRC's meeting space
- The factors helping the FRC provide these services
- The factors hindering the FRC provide these services
- The longer term impacts perceived by FRCs to follow from this working method (a series of prompt questions are available to help in the facilitation of this discussion).

SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

Outputs in relation to Providing Front-of-house and Administrative Supports

During 2010, FRCs received 295,395 visits by individuals to use front-of-house administrative supports (including computers, phones, photocopiers, etc.). This figure equates to just over 11 visits being made each working day⁷ to each of the 106 participating FRCs.

A further 33,395 visits were made by community groups to use these facilities. This is broadly in line with the 33,676 visits made during 2009.

⁷ Where 252 working days constitute a year.

FRC meeting rooms / premises were used a further 21,815 times by community groups and mainstream service providers. This is a significant increase on the 19,725 uses recorded in 2009 and the 16,085 recorded during 2008.

Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

A number of FRCs located outside Dublin noted that demand for front-of-house administrative supports was high due to a lack of service provision locally:

‘Tacú is the only local facility where individuals, families and groups can get affordable photocopying and get meetings rooms.’ **Tacú Resource Centre, Ballinrobe**

The difficulty accessing administrative supports in many rural areas is reflected in the nature of supports being made available. Many rural FRCs have broadened the range of front-of-house services being made available to the community to include services that go beyond those which are administrative in nature; others have upgraded the quality of their systems to overcome disadvantages associated with their geographic isolation.

‘Having more computers and internet facilities available as well as washing machines and sewing machines increased usage.’ **Cara House FRC, Co. Donegal**

‘ATS [telecommunications company] was offering reconditioned telephone systems to the community and voluntary sector at reduced prices. We availed of this offer in 2010 and installed a new telephone system...together with re-configuring our broadband, adding boosters in the office and training room.’ **Downstrands Family Resource Centre, Co. Donegal**

The limited and sporadic availability of broadband in rural areas was frequently noted by rural projects when commenting on this element of their work. Many FRCs have described their centres as the only local place where broadband services can be accessed by members of the community. For one FRC, acting as a place where the community could access broadband was not enough. Cáirdeas (Kilmovee) FRC

successfully organised the local community to receive a broadband service for their area.

‘The FRC was successful in getting a broadband service in the area so the need for the internet room was decreased but many people were extremely positive about what we achieved.’ **Cáirdeas (Kilmovee) FRC**

Notwithstanding the lack of alternative service providers in rural areas, FRCs in Dublin received an average of 50% more visits from individuals accessing front-of-house administrative supports than did those FRCs located outside of Dublin. This suggests that the larger populations and better transport infrastructures found within the catchment areas of Dublin FRCs more than compensates for a lack of options within poorly serviced rural areas in terms of the number of visits received to access these services. A similar trend is evident in terms of visits from other community and voluntary groups; FRCs located within Dublin received an average of 333 visits during 2010 compared to those FRCs located outside of Dublin who received an average of 297 visits to access these services.

As might be expected, well-established FRCs received more visits from individuals and other community and voluntary groups seeking front-of-house administrative supports than did newly-established FRCs. On average, more established FRCs received almost 50% more visits from individuals than did newly-established FRCs (an average of 12 per day compared to an average of 8 per day). A similar trend is evident in the number of visits received from other community and voluntary groups (an average of 330 in more established FRCs and an average of 254 in more recently established FRCs).

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Responding to the considerable demand for front-of-house administrative supports has an impact upon FRC resources. The average FRC staff invests 7.6% of their time attending to the demand for front-of-house administrative supports; for some FRCs, however, providing front-of-house administrative supports requires a significantly greater investment of staff time. Time deployed ranges from 0.3% in one FRC to

24.6% in another. There is no discernible geographic or age-related pattern describing the priority assigned by individual FRCs to this working method.

FRCs referred to the value of providing administrative supports to individuals, community and voluntary groups and mainstream service providers. When discussing the benefit of this service to individuals, many FRCs referenced the current economic climate and high rates of unemployment as being a key factor behind the demand for administrative supports.

‘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, filling in application forms and having theses written up. The administration service is beneficial to all the community including the business community. Ten businesses and Sport Clubs used the centre to have brochures, flyers, tickets and other work carried out by our administration services.’ **Mevagh FRC, Letterkenny**

‘Since the downturn in the economy many more men who are unemployed are using the centre to source information. FÁS have installed a Jobs and Training Bank which is used by many people.’ **Solas FRC, Co. Galway**

‘Due to an increase in the number of people starting up new initiatives (voluntary/community as well as commercial) there is a bigger demand for administrative and front of house support. The fact that so many people come to the FRC for this type of support shows that the Centre is being seen as a resource to all in our community.’ **Killaloe/Ballina F.R.C.**

Other community and voluntary groups, along with mainstream service providers, also benefit from these services.

‘[The centre] is used as an outreach by many organisations and agencies, i.e. MABS, Mental Health Ireland, Jigsaw, Teen Between, Citizen's Information, Educational Welfare Officer, Galway Rural Development, Social Welfare, FÁS, HSE, Breast Check and St. Vincent de Paul.’ **Solas Resource Centre, Co. Galway**

‘For [community/voluntary] groups the centre provides warm, comfortable premises in which to meet. We know that without our support the Traveller Women's group and Girlszone group would not be in a position to continue.’

Taghmon FRC, Co. Wexford

‘Seven [community/voluntary] groups use the centre regularly for a very minimum, or no, charge. This enables them to hold regular meetings and helps with developing their group aims.’ **Teach Oscail FRC, Co. Cavan**

‘The Kerry LGBT group began to use our resources for meeting space during 2010. We can offer them a confidential evening meeting space in our office which is in a private location adjacent to our counselling room. Securing a central, Mid-Kerry, confidential meeting space is crucial to the survival of this group. Privacy is paramount as some group members may not want to be identified within the wider community due to the stigma which can still be attached to LGBT groups.’ **Castlemaine Family Resource Centre**

‘The Community Committee, a residents group, would not survive without the use of the resources in the Project. This group have become very proactive since the Project started to provide a meeting space for this group as they receive no funding.’ **Newpark Close FRC, Kilkenny**

When asked to identify which factors are most helpful to FRCs supplying front-of-house administrative supports the most commonly cited feature referred to was the attitude of staff and volunteers.

‘Approachable volunteers and staff ensure that users and visitors can access the technology easily and efficiently when required. People/groups are also empowered to learn how to use the technology/equipment themselves. Discretion and confidentiality [is key] so that people feel easy to request the volunteers and staff to do the small piece of sensitive photocopying, to advocate by phone or email for them. This is particularly true for many with speech or/and hearing difficulties. We do this without disempowering the individual as it is done with them not for them.’ **Family Life Centre, Boyle**

Having a limited number of staff and a poor geographical location were cited as main factors hindering the delivery of these services.

‘At times it becomes difficult to deal with clients who need a lot of time while seeking support to give them information/listening ear/etc. while answering the phone, attending to other callers etc. There are times when 3 people are needed at front of house administration not just one.’ **Ballymote Family Resource Centre, Co. Sligo**

‘Insufficient staff ...to undertake much of the services we aim to provide.’
Sligo FRC

‘Space [hinders service delivery]. We have had to develop ways of ensuring that we use our space as wisely as possible. We have moved one of our community education programmes to Clones [and] we have had no problem filling the space with other supports.’ **Mullaghmatt Cortolvin F.R.C., Co. Monaghan**

‘As the FRC is extremely busy we are met all the time with the problem of space. Our offices are not adequate and our meeting room is too small for the majority of our activities thus making it very difficult for us to provide the community with a facility that meets the needs of the community.’ **Donegal Family Resource Centre Ltd.**

Section 11 Contributing to Policy Work

FRCs build partnerships and jointly contribute to the coordination and delivery of development initiatives with other community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders where an integrated approach is required. Alongside this, FRCs seek to contribute to an understanding of the impact of policy decisions upon families and communities and to play a role in influencing the decision-making process as it relates to family support and community development.

Contributing to local networking and policy work contributes to the programme objective of promoting an inclusive and participative society as set out in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011).

Note on Methodology

Data collected relating to local networking and policy work includes the results of a ranking exercise focusing on relationships with working partners and an audit of involvement in policy arenas, including contributing to seminars and networks. The ranking exercise focusing on an FRC's relationships with other working partners is undertaken during a facilitated meeting of each Voluntary Board of Directors. The purpose of this exercise is to rank the quality and effectiveness of the relationships, not the amount of time or energy that go into building or maintaining these relationships. It should be noted that when conducting this exercise Voluntary Directors are made aware that the data will be made available to the Family Support Agency (their funders) and the Regional and Specialist Support Agencies (with whom they are contracted to work). Quantitative data relating to networking activity and attendance at seminars is entered in the Outputs sections of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Data is requested in relation to:

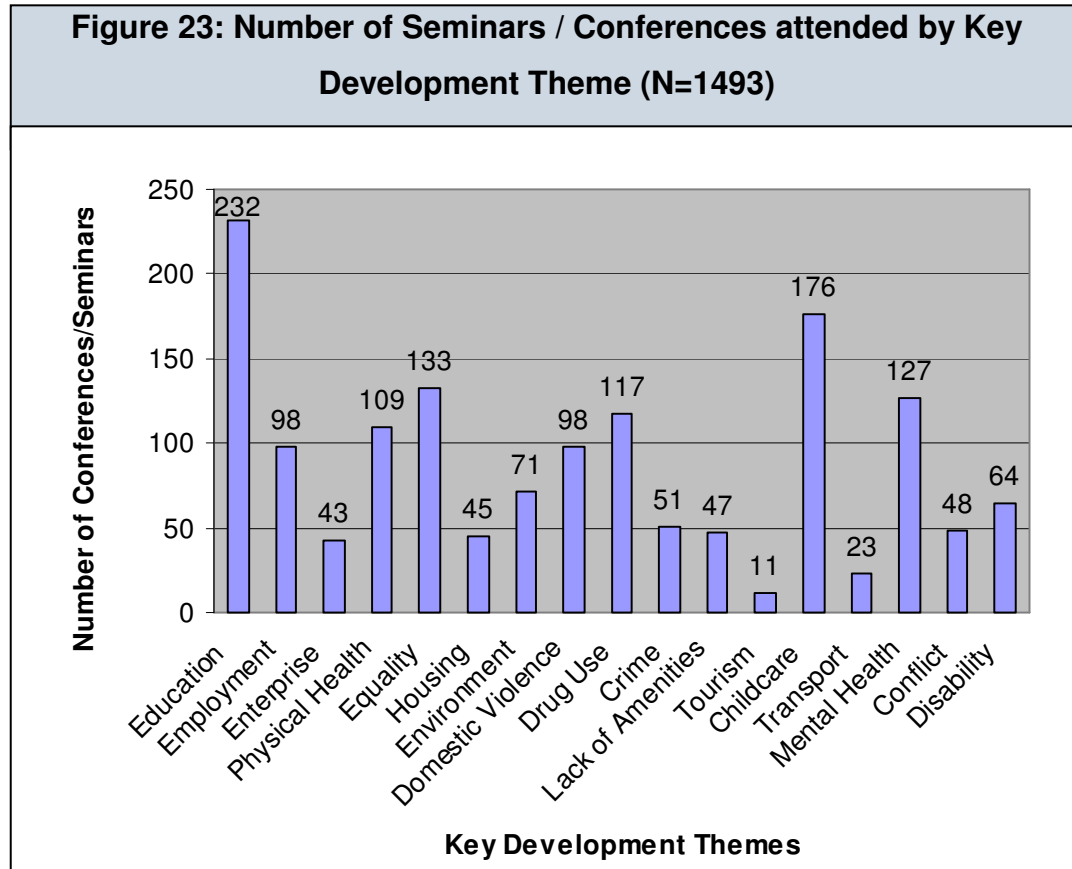
- The perceived quality and perceived effectiveness of relationships with working partners

- The number of seminars / conferences attended per development theme
- The number of regional / national networks to which FRCs contribute per development theme
- The factors helping the FRC provide these services
- The factors hindering the FRC provide these services
- The longer term impacts perceived by FRCs to follow from this working method (a series of prompt questions is made available for this discussion).

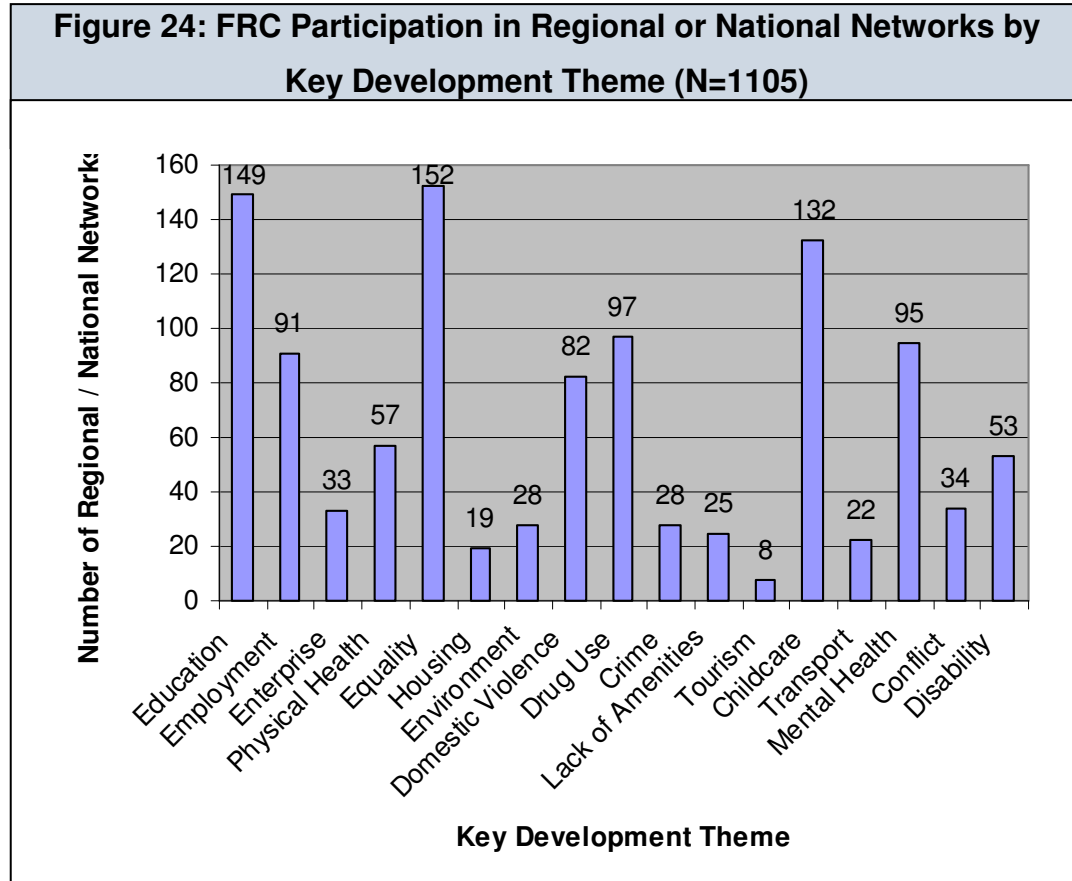
SPEAK users are then asked to comment on why these tasks were undertaken and to identify emerging themes through comparison with corresponding data entries made in previous years.

Outputs in relation to Local Networking and Policy Work

During 2010, FRCs contributed to 1,493 seminars or conferences. The development themes addressed by these seminars and networks are illustrated in Figure 23.



Regional and national networks also benefited from FRC input. During 2010, FRCs contributed to 1,105 regional or national network meetings. The key development themes being addressed by these networks are identified in Figure 24.



Despite pressure on staff and volunteer time, the level of FRC participation in seminars and networking events during 2010 was slightly up on the 2009 figures of 1,333 conferences and seminars and 997 national and regional networks.

The six issues ranked as highest priorities by Voluntary Boards of Directors at the commencement of the 2010 evaluation cycle were Education, Employment, Mental Health, Childcare, Drugs and Physical Health. The priority assigned to these issues is reflected strongly in both Figure 23 and Figure 24.

Positive impacts perceived by FRCs to flow from this work were reported across a very broad range of issues and at various decision making levels:

‘In 2010 the issue of Legal Highs and Headshops was affecting our community and we worked towards a change in legislation regarding the sale of legal highs.’ **Monsignor McCarthy Family Resource Centre, Athlone**

[The FRC helped] organise a conference on poverty and inequality in Mayo in October this year. This conference was attended by approximately 170 people, many who were people that experienced poverty rather than just agency representatives. This conference was complimented by many of the speakers partaking in a 2 hour live broadcast by Mid West Radio from the event.’

Westport FRC

‘We secured funding from Atlantic Philanthropies to put together a housing publication that documents best practice in the delivery of regeneration. This publication builds on the previous policy work done and we hope to move this policy document into law.’ **Fatima Groups United**

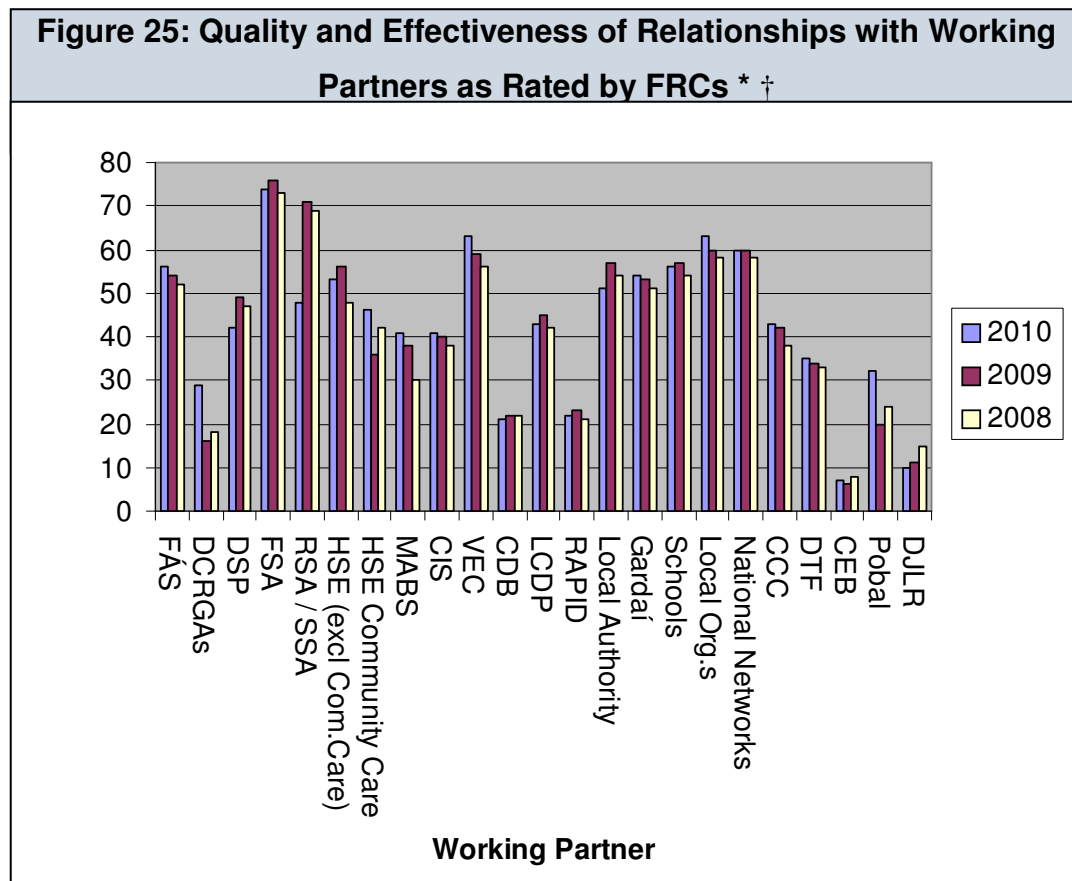
‘One impact [of our work] is that the HSE is now trying to increase and improve health provision locally through the primary care team. The HSE is working towards a system where a patient would have a smoother transition from one health service provider to another.’ **Mohill Family Support Centre Ltd., Co. Leitrim**

‘Extensive work with the Redevelopment Steering Group and local and national press coverage and lobbying resulted in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council deciding to de-tenant and redevelop the Rosemount Court Complex.’ **Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.**

When asked to rank the quality and effectiveness of the relationships enjoyed with their working partners, FRCs assigned the highest values to their relationships with the Family Support Agency, the Vocational Education Committees and Local Organisations. The lowest values were assigned to the relationships with County

Enterprise Boards, Department of Justice and Law Reform, RAPID and the County Development Boards (Figure 25).

The most noticeable swing between the 2009 and 2010 returns concerns the value assigned to FRCs' working relationship with their Regional Support Agencies and Specialist Support Agencies. The value assigned to this relationship fell significantly over this period. This may be related to an interruption to the support element of the programme that took place between the end of March 2010 and beginning of September 2010. During this time no support agencies were contracted to work with FRCs.



* During the exercises that collected this data working relationships are ranked relative to each other. No unit of value exists to measure the 'quality and effectiveness' of relationships. For this reason, numerical values on the Y axis are indicative only.

† The Local and Community Development Programme is an amalgam of the Community Development Programme and the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme. The comparison made here relates to the aggregated values assigned to the CDP and LDSIP during 2009 and value assigned to the LCDP during 2010.

Variations across the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

The length of time that an FRC has been established had only a modest bearing on the number of seminars or conferences attended during 2010; the average newly-established FRC attended 20 seminars or conferences while the average well-established FRC attended 25. However, the geographical location of FRCs made a significant difference to the number of seminars or conferences attended. FRCs located in Dublin attended an average of 40 during 2010 whereas their counterparts outside Dublin attended, on average, 21. This is most likely due to the extra time and expense involved in attending seminars and conferences for rural FRCs.

The geographical location of FRCs also had little influence over the type of conferences or seminars attended. The three most popular development themes being addressed at seminars and conferences attended by Dublin FRCs were Education, Childcare and Mental Health. Those FRCs located outside Dublin most frequently attended seminars and conferences focusing on Education, Childcare and Equality. Seminars and conferences addressing Tourism and Transport issues were the least popular with both cohorts.

There is also a strong similarity between the perceived quality and effectiveness of FRCs' working relationships as ranked by Voluntary Boards of Directors within Dublin based FRCs and those located outside of Dublin. Figure 26 demonstrates a marked similarity in how FRCs viewed their relationships with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations during 2010. Notwithstanding this, variation does exist. Dublin based FRCs considered their working relationships with RAPID and Local Authorities to be considerably more constructive than did FRCs located outside Dublin. For their part, non Dublin based FRCs considered their working relationship with County Development Boards to be more constructive than did those FRCs based in Dublin.

Figure 26: Geographical Variations in the Quality and Effectiveness of Relationships with Working Partners as Rated by FRCs, 2010 * †

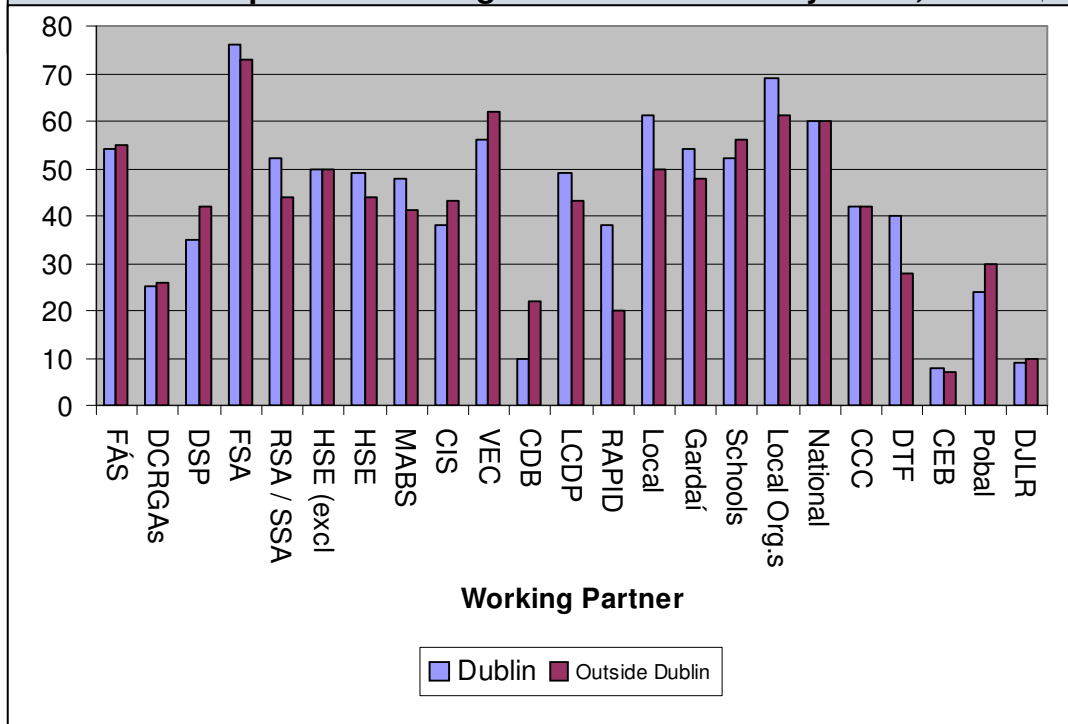
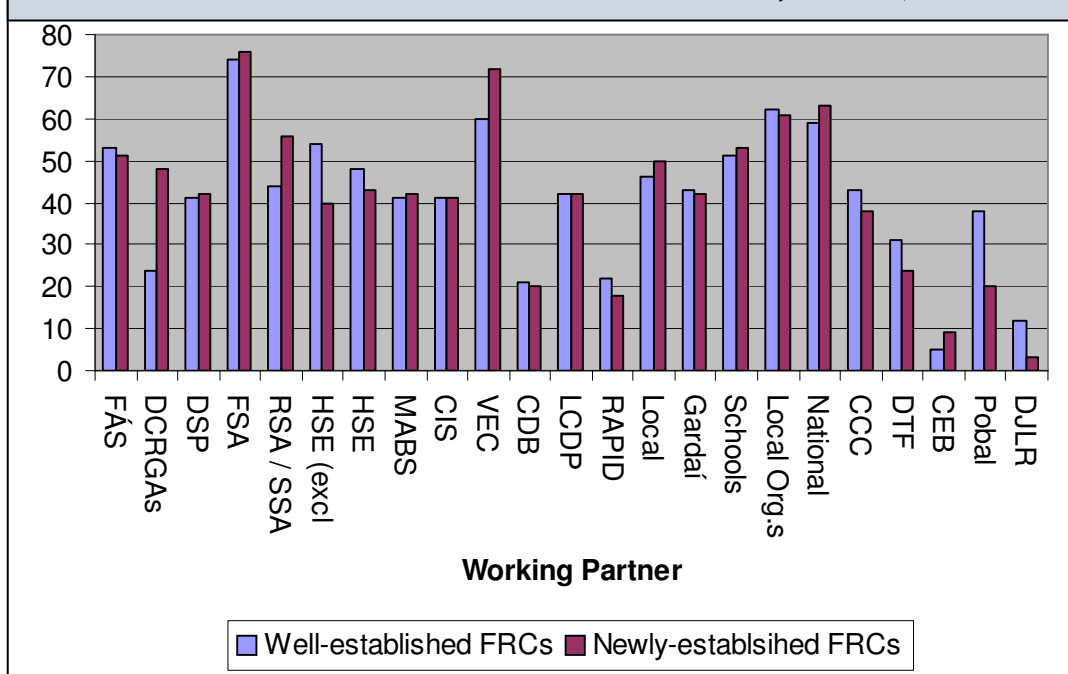


Figure 27: Variations in the Quality and Effectiveness of Relationships with Working Partners as Rated by Newly-Established and Well-Established FRCs, 2010 * †



* No unit of value exists to measure the 'quality and effectiveness' of relationships. For this reason, numerical values on the Y axis are indicative only.

† The comparison made here relates to the aggregated values assigned to the CDP and LDSIP during 2009 and value assigned to the LCDP during 2010.

The similarity between how well-established and newly-established FRCs value their working relationships is also striking. Figure 27 demonstrates that whereas well-established FRCs assigned a higher value to their relationship with Pobal, newly-established FRCs assigned higher values to their relationships with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Vocational Education Committees. These notable exceptions apart, there appears to be very little to differentiate the values assigned by newly-established and well-established FRCs.

Considerations for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

Qualitative data provided by FRCs recognises that effective policy work involves meeting two related challenges. Firstly, FRCs must distil the essence, and potential implications, of relevant policy decisions and disseminate this information throughout the communities in which they are located. Secondly, FRCs must facilitate communities to reach a position on issues being debated and input this position into relevant decision making processes.

When disseminating information concerning relevant policy decisions, FRCs exploit the tools they are already using to provide information within local communities:

‘The FRC monthly newsletter ensures that information is shared concerning these topics.’ **The Forge FRC, Co. Donegal**

‘Empowering the community to have a voice in policies that affect their lives plays an important part in the work of the FRC. The PR sub group produce monthly newsletters and regular information leaflets for the community on a wide range of [policy] issues.’ **Newpark Close FRC, Kilkenny**

When contributing to decision making processes FRCs rely heavily on the value of being part of a national programme. This is evident in the significance placed on networking with other FRCs, on being part of regional and national fora and having access to support structures.

‘The Western Region Forum of Family Resource Centres continues to be an invaluable resource in terms of developing strategies and measured responses

to issues common across all of the FRCs in the region.’ **Loughrea Family Resource Centre**

‘The FRC continues to use the Regional Forum of Family Resource Centres and the Regional Support Agency to bring local issues to national attention.’

Castlemaine Family Resource Centre, Co. Kerry

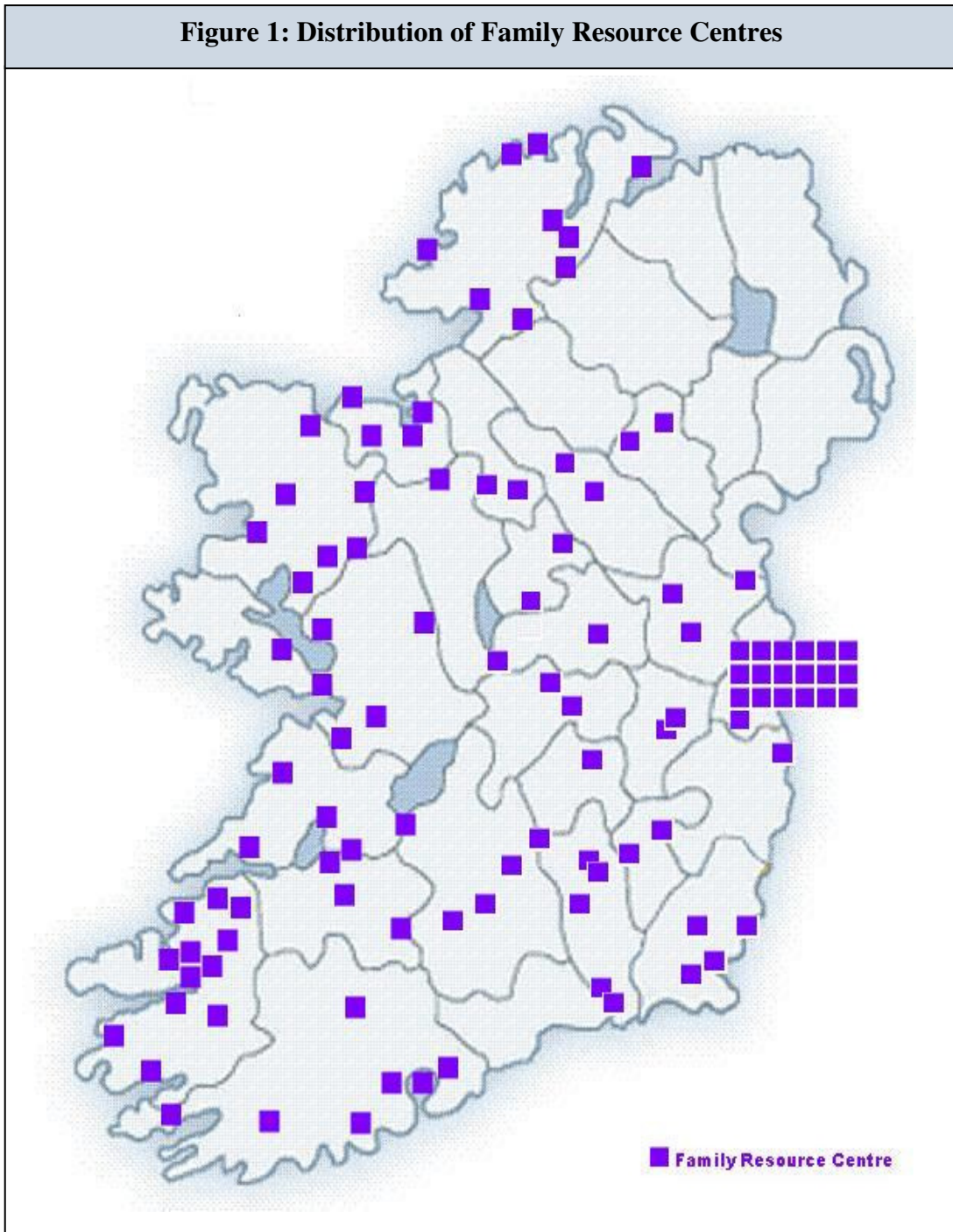
‘The Voluntary Board of Directors with the support of our Regional Support Agency and the Regional Forum continues to undertake effective policy

work.’ **Monsignor McCarthy Family Resource Centre, Athlone**

A lack of time was the most commonly cited factor hindering further engagement with this work.

Appendix One: Map of Distribution of Family Resource Centres

Figure 1: Distribution of Family Resource Centres



Appendix Two: List of Family Resource 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

Gorey 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

Mill 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.
Sacred Heart FRC
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

** Newly-established FRCs: launched in 2006 or more recently*

Appendix Three: List of SPEAK User Resources

The following resources are available to download from www.westtraining.ie

- Instruction Sheet: Downloading and/or upgrading SPEAK FRC
- Copy of Presentation: Introduction to SPEAK for new FRC members

- SPEAK FRC User Guide
- Screen by Screen Guide to Operational Environment Section
- Screen by Screen Guide to Resource Audit Section
- Screen by Screen Guide to Outputs Section
- Screen by Screen Guide to Impacts Section
- Prompts for Facilitators of SPEAK Impacts Meeting

- SPEAK FRC National Database User Guide
- Instruction Sheet: Backing Up the SPEAK FRC National Database
- Training Exercises for Interrogating SPEAK FRC National Database

- Instruction Sheet: Making SPEAK FRC Returns

Appendix Four: List of SPEAK FRC 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.
Ethnic Minority (excluding Travellers)	Members of ethnic minority groups, 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	Vulnerable families (consisting of more than one person) being worked with as a single unit.
Gay and Lesbian	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people.

Bibliography

- Aontas (2010) *Adult Education in Ireland* Available at:
<http://www.aontas.com/information/howtogetinvolved.html> (Accessed: 13.08.10)
- Commission on the Family (1998) *Strengthening Families for Life: Final Report of the Commission on the Family to the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs*, Dublin: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland (nd) (*UNOCINI*) *Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland: Thresholds of Need Model* [online] Available at
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/thresholds_of_need_model.doc (Accessed on 8th August 2011)
- Dolan, P., Canavan, J. and Pinkerton, J. (2006) *Family Support as Reflective Practice* London: Jessica Kingsley
- Family Support Agency (2010) *Funding & Grants: Family Resource Centre Programme* Available at: <http://www.fsa.ie/funding-grants/family-resource-centre-programme/> (Accessed on 8th August 2011)
- Family Support Agency (2010) *Contract between the Family Support Agency and [Name] Family Resource Centre* Unpublished legal contract
- Family Support Agency (2011) *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* Dublin: Family Support Agency
- Government of Ireland (2000) *National Children's Strategy: Our Children, Their Lives* Dublin: Stationery Office
- Kelleher and Kelleher (1997) *Family Resource Centres* Dublin: Stationary Office

Office of the Minister for Children (2007) *The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* Dublin: The Stationery Office

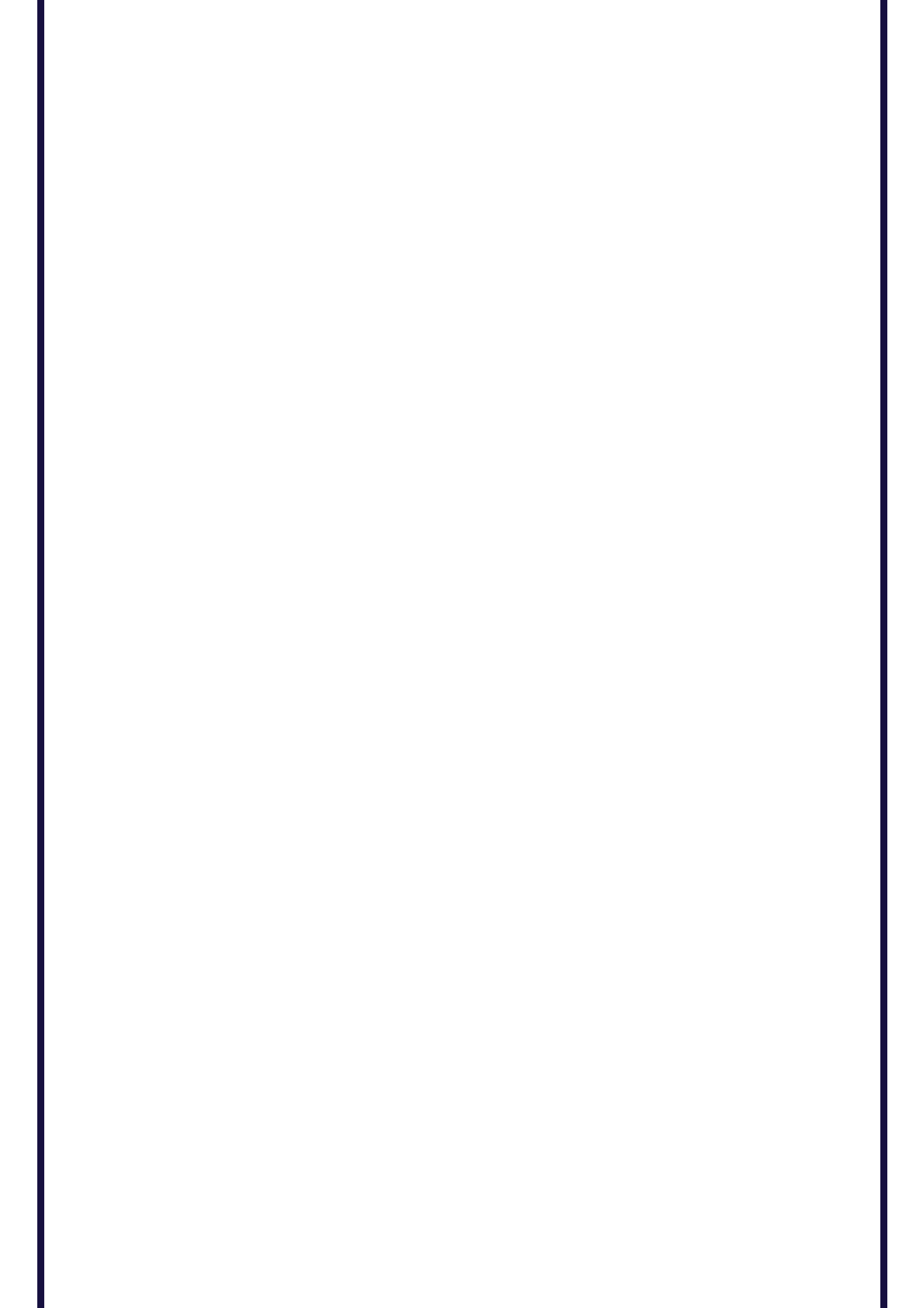
Pinkerton, J., Dolan, P. and Canavan, J. (2004) *Family Support in Ireland: Definition and Strategic Intent*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children, Stationary Office

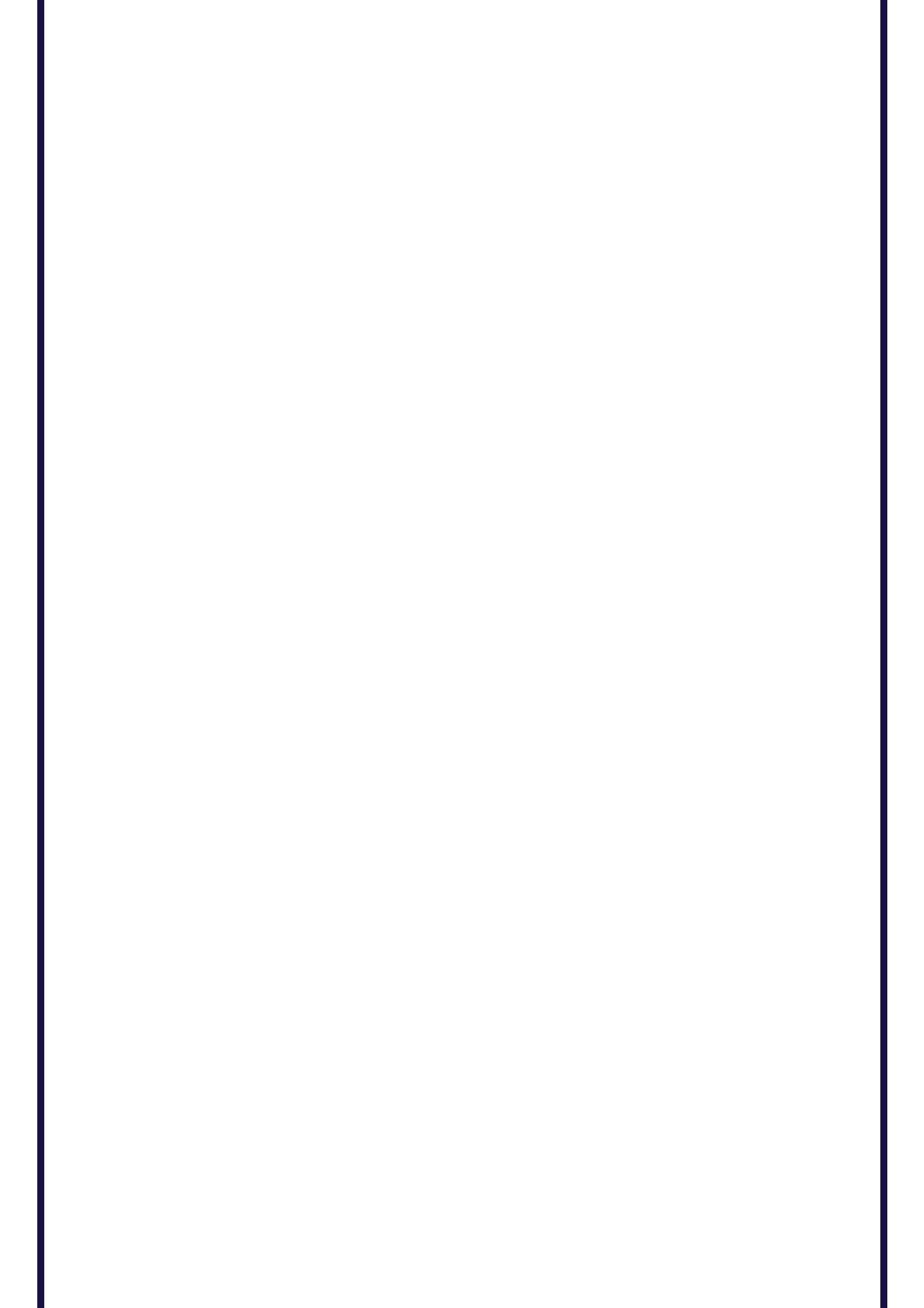
Pobal (1999) 'Community Development Strategies and Actions within the Integrated Local Development Programme' in *Insights No. 11*. Dublin: Pobal

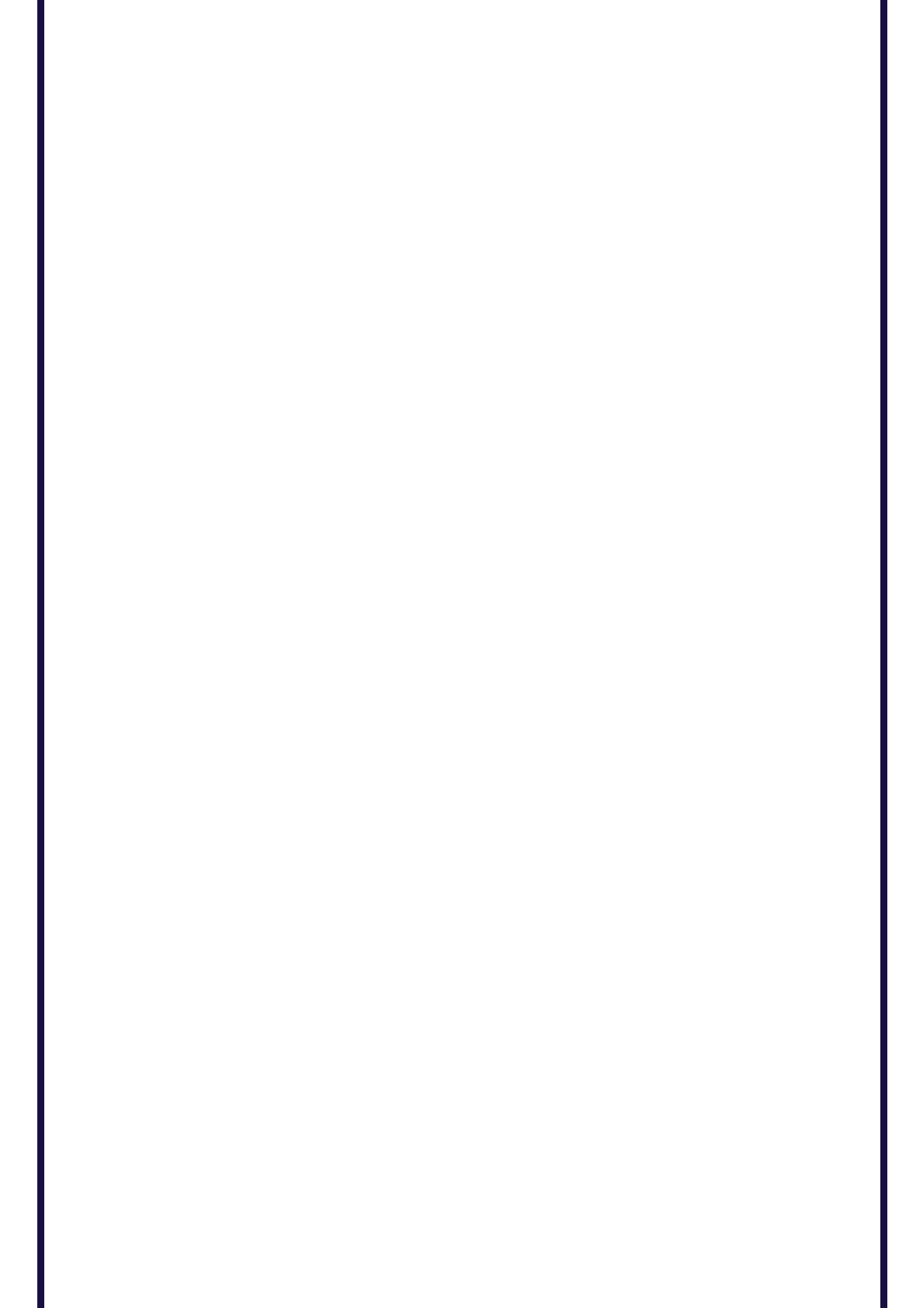
Pobal (2011) *Local and Community Development Programme Guidelines* Dublin: Pobal

Abbreviations

FRC	Family Resource Centre
FSA	Family Support Agency
RSA	Regional Support Agency
SSA	Specialist 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
DJLR	Department of Justice and Law Reform
DCEAGs	Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCRGAs	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DSP	Department of Social Protection
LCDP	Local and Community Development Programme







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 Stiobhna
Ardán an Iarla
Baile Átha Cliath**

