



Family Support Agency



Annual Report 2005



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1. Chairman's Statement



1. Chairman's Statement

I am pleased to present the 2005 Annual Report of the Family Support Agency to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs.

We have completed two years of our three year strategic plan which was launched in 2004 and I am delighted to be able to report that the momentum and level of activity built up last year across our five strategic priorities have been maintained and indeed exceeded.

In March 2005, the Agency made a submission to the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform regarding the relaxation of the in-camera rule for Family Law Cases. We are very pleased that the Agency is the nominating body for family mediators who can make reports for the Court.

Our submission to the All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution in April, while acknowledging that the family based on marriage provides a stable framework for spouses and their children, focused on a number of issues including the changing definition of what constitutes a family in today's society. We also referred to the lack of adequate provision for the rights of the child in the Constitution and suggested that the special place afforded to the woman in the home should be extended to include the man.

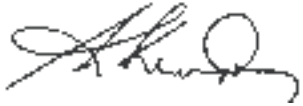
In July, I was privileged to lead a delegation comprising Chief Executive, Pat Bennett, Assistant Principal, Bill O'Dea and Board Member Muriel Walls to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social & Family Affairs to update them on the work that the Agency has been doing in partnership with the many service providers and on its plans for the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the staff of the Agency under the expert leadership of Chief Executive Pat Bennett for their continued hard work and commitment to providing quality support services for families throughout the country. My thanks also to my fellow Board members for their continued support and wisdom.



Mr. Michael O'Kennedy
Chairperson

Finally, I would like to thank the Minister for Social and Family Affairs Seamus Brennan, T.D. and the officials in the Department for providing the resources to enable us to enhance the services that we support throughout the country.



Michael O'Kennedy
Chairperson





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2. Chief Executive's Report



2. Chief Executive's Report

We have now completed two years of our three year 2004-2006 Strategic Plan and I am pleased to report that on all fronts we continue to make real progress in the implementation of that Strategy and in so doing fulfill our role as a key provider, both directly through our Family Mediation Service and indirectly through the many communities that provide services at local level.



Mr. Pat Bennett
Chief Executive

The Family Resource Centre Programme goes from strength to strength. In the Strategic Plan under the National Development programme there is a commitment to have 100 Family Resource Centres in place by the end of 2006 and thanks to increased funding this year there are now 88 Centres in the Programme. I am confident that we will reach our target by the end of next year. This year we also provided €25,000 to support the Family Resource Centre National Forum, another important initiative to support the ongoing development of the programme.

A key function of the Family Support Agency is to support voluntary organisations providing marriage/relationship, child and bereavement counselling in local communities. In the past year we have been able to provide funding for 547 of these organisations. This is an increase from 523 in 2004.

The Family Mediation Services continues to develop. This year we continued to upgrade and develop the service nationally and in 2006 we will continue to focus our energies to reduce the numbers on the waiting lists.

2005 saw the development of our website. The response we have had to the website has been very positive and we will continue to look at ways to develop this important resource.

These achievements and many others outlined in this report would not have been possible without the support and commitment of many people. I would like to acknowledge the continued support of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D. and the officials in his Department.

I thank our Chairperson, Mr Michael O'Kennedy SC and the Board for their continued and unstinting support for me and all the Agency staff to whom I also extend my sincerest thanks for their dedication and hard work.

To the service providers I would like to thank you once again for your support and huge commitment to your communities. We have a clear Strategic Plan and we are committed to realising the goals outlined in the plan.



Pat Bennett

Chief Executive





3. Board



3. Board

Chairperson



Mr. Michael O'Kennedy
Senior Counsel

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

Members



Ms. Clare Cashman
Project Co-Ordinator,
Millennium Resource
Centre, Ballingarry,
Co. Tipperary



Ms. Paddie Connellan
Member of Prison
Visiting Committee,
Nurse, Aromatherapist
and Reflexologist



Mr. Geoffrey Corry
Staff Representative



Ms. Margaret Farrell (1)
Staff Representative



Ms. Helen Faughnan
Department of Social
and Family Affairs



Ms. Angela Gaule
Consultant Mediator
and Member of the
Mediators Institute
of Ireland



Ms. Sinead Hanly (2)
Counsellor, Research
Consultant and
qualified Barrister



Ms. Rita Hayes
Member of the Prison
Visiting Committee,
Involved in Bereavement
Counselling



Mr. Dick Hickey
Director, St. Brigid's
Family Resource
Centre, Waterford



Mr. Gerry Mangan (3)
Department of Social
and Family Affairs



Mr. Brendan Murphy (4)
Psychologist and
member of the
Mediators Institute
of Ireland



Ms. Dilly O'Brien
Department of
Health and Children



Dr. Colm O'Connor
Clinical Psychologist
and Director of
Cork Marriage
Counselling Centre



Ms. Bríd Rocks
Assistant Principal,
Bush Post Primary
School, Dundalk,
Dip. Counselling
and Psychotherapy



Ms. Muriel Walls
Solicitor and family
law specialist

- (1) Resigned, September 2005 – replaced by Mr. Geoffrey Corry
 - (2) Completed term of office, May 2005 – replaced by Ms. Rita Hayes
 - (3) Completed term of office, May 2005 – replaced by Ms. Helen Faughnan
 - (4) Resigned, October 2005 – replaced by Ms. Angela Gaule
- See Appendix 1 for details of Board meetings in 2005 and for details of Board Sub-Groups.

4. Role and Strategic Priorities



4. Role and Strategic Priorities

4.1 Role

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

4.2 Strategic Priorities

The Family Support Agency's first Strategic Plan, which was developed in consultation with its stakeholders, sets out five Strategic Priorities for the Agency over the 3 years from 2004 to 2006. These Strategic Priorities set out the overall direction of the Family Support Agency in the years 2004, 2005 and 2006:

- Support and strengthen families through the delivery of high quality support services for families throughout the country.
- Foster a supportive community environment for families in partnership with the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.
- Contribute to the effectiveness of family policy and services by undertaking or commissioning research into matters related to the Agency's functions or such other matters as the Minister may request.
- Promote the Family Support Agency as a key provider of support services and related information for families in Ireland.
- Create an environment which recognises the value of Family Support Agency staff and supports their continuing development.

Section 5 sets out progress across the five Strategic Priorities in 2005.

5. Work of the Agency in 2005



5. Work of the Agency in 2005

5.1 Progress in 2005

In 2005, the Family Support Agency continued to develop its organisation structure in line with the priorities set out in the Agency's 2004-2006 Strategic Plan. Also, throughout 2005 the Agency continued the process of building and enhancing relationships with its stakeholders to ensure the delivery of high quality services for families.

The Agency's achievements in 2005 include:

- Provision of a direct family mediation service to some 1430 couples nationwide.
- Funding to 88 Family Resource Centres (12 new Centres joined the Programme in 2005).
- Funding to 547 voluntary and community organisations providing counselling services.
- Review of the first Phase of the Families Research Programme commenced.
- Review of the operation of the Agency's Counselling Grants Scheme commenced.
- Development of the Agency's Website.
- Co-funding of a Family Support Conference in NUI Galway.
- Policy submissions on the Constitution, Childcare, Parenting Alone, Civil Liability and Courts Act (in-camera rule).
- Appearance before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs.

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

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

The Family Support Agency's organisational structure and staffing in 2005 are detailed in Appendix 3. The Agency's 15 premises throughout the country are listed in Appendix 4.

5.2 Finance and Accounts

The Family Support Agency was allocated a budget of €24.46m in 2005. This budget allowed for the continuation and development of the family support services for which the Agency has responsibility.

The Agency's Accounts and Financial Statement for 2005 are at Appendix 5.

5.3 The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

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

Policy Priorities

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

Services and Activities

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

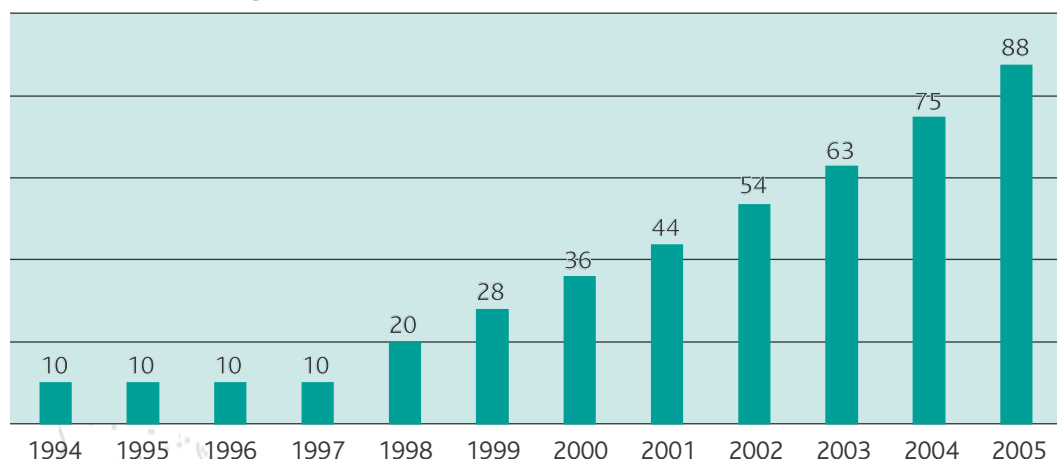
- Information, advice and support to target groups and families in the area.
- Practical assistance to community groups such as training, information and advice.
- Education courses and training opportunities.

- Child-care facilities for those attending courses provided by the project.
- Initiatives to enhance the role of young fathers in the lives of their children.
- Involvement of men in the life of the community.
- Lone Parents Groups.
- Women’s groups.
- The use of local centres to act as a meeting point for various groups and services, e.g. C.I.C., MABS, AA, residents meetings etc.
- After-school clubs.

Core Funded Centres

Since the commencement of the Programme in 1994, the number of core funded centres has increased from 10 in 1994 to 88 in 2005:

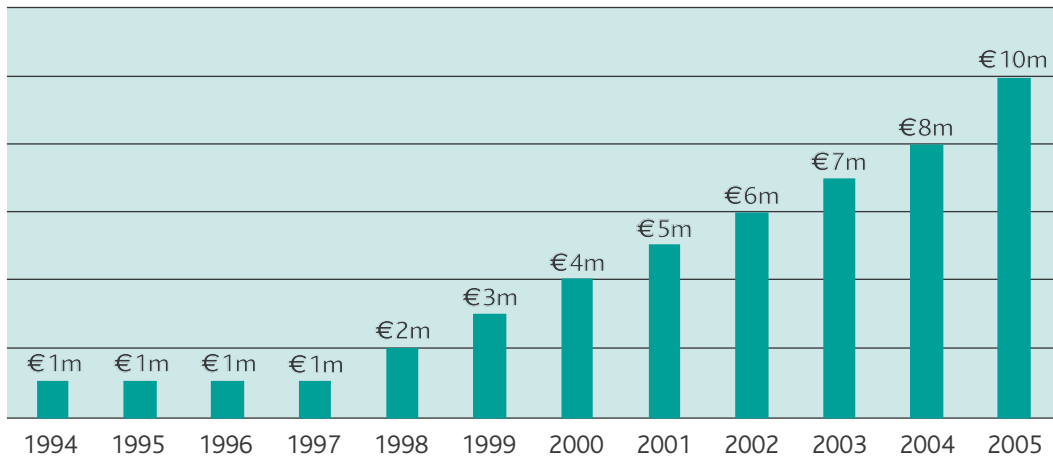
Core Funded Family Resource Centres 1994-2005



Funding

Funding for the Programme has increased from €317,000 (£250,000) in 1994 to €10.616m in 2005. Under Partnership 2000, there is a commitment to have 100 Family Resource Centres in the Programme by the end of 2006.

Family Resource Centres Funding 1994-2005



Support Agencies/Specialist Support Agencies

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

Networking

The Agency encourages networking among Family Resource Centres at a regional and national level. To encourage and strengthen such networking, €25,000 was allocated to the Family Resource Centre (FRC) National Forum in 2005. The Agency also held quarterly meetings with the FRC National Forum.

Evaluation

Nexus Research Co-operative was engaged by the Agency, following a tendering process, to roll out an evaluation model to all Projects in the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. Training commenced in November 2004 and was completed in May 2005. Training is continuing for new groups coming into the Programme.

5.4 Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services

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

During 2005 a total amount of €8.407m was allocated for the Scheme of Grants which represented an increase of 10% compared to 2004 (€7.610m).

Allocation of funding

A total of 568 applications were received from organizations seeking grant funding of which 547 were approved, an increase of 24 approved applications compared to 2005. Ninety (90) of these organisations were applying for grant funding for the first time. The overall amount of funding sought by organisations in 2005 was €16.65m.

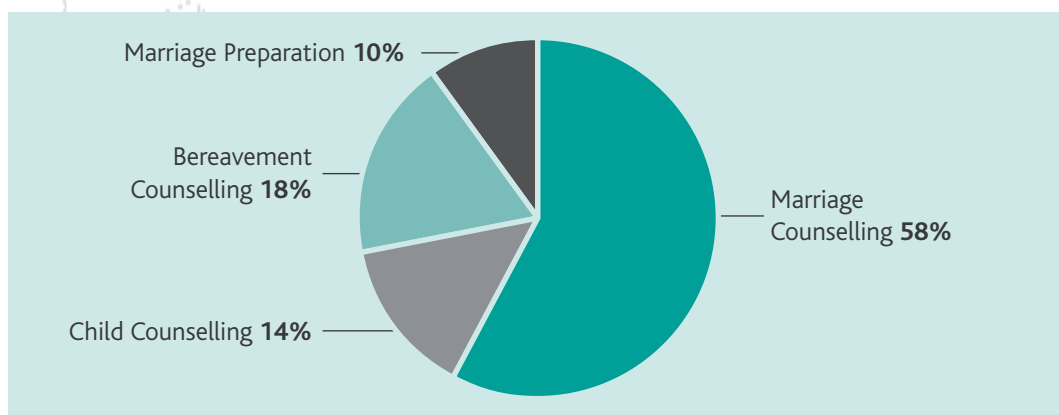
Priorities governing funding allocations

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

Breakdown of funding

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

Grant Category	Funding Amount
Marriage Counselling	€4.781m
Marriage Preparation	€0.826m
Child Counselling	€1.177m
Bereavement	€1.474m



Organisations providing marriage counselling, marriage preparation courses, child counselling and bereavement counselling received an increase in their funding over 2004 except for those organisations who did not seek an increase.

The majority of organisations providing bereavement support did not receive an increase in their funding as they are considered to be receiving adequate funding.

Budget Specials

The grant funding for 2005 included a sum of €124,000 allocated in the 2003 budget for the following special projects

- €50,000 to ACCORD Central Office towards the training to accreditation or its equivalent of ACCORD counsellors.
- €29,000 to Barnardos Child Bereavement Service (Solas) towards the development of their Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Model (C.I.S.D.).
- €20,000 to Parental Equality towards the development of their parenting programme for separated couples.
- €25,000 towards networking in the counselling sector.

Evaluation of Services

Some 40 organisations throughout the country were visited in 2005 to evaluate the standard and type of service being provided and overall the standard of services provided by these organisations was found to be satisfactory.

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

Networking Conference

In January 2005 the Cork Marriage Counselling Service hosted a networking conference in the Hudson Bay Hotel, Athlone on behalf of the Family Support Agency. This was deemed to be a very worthwhile exercise in bringing together the managers of nationwide counselling organisations to discuss how the services can be developed to meet the challenges facing families in the future. Further networking conferences are planned for 2006.

5.5 Family Mediation Service

The Family Support Agency also has responsibility for the Family Mediation Service, a free, professional and confidential service for couples, married and non-married, who have decided to separate or divorce and who together want to negotiate the terms of their separation or divorce with the help of a trained mediator. Family mediation assists separating couples to look at the resources and options open to them and to reach an agreement that meets the interests of both and the interests of their children.

The Process of Mediation

When a couple arrive at a Family Mediation centre they are seen together by their mediator. The mediator explains that in this process they, the couple, are the decision makers, that the mediator's role is to facilitate their discussions and to manage their negotiations. The mediator is neither a counsellor nor a legal adviser. At this session the mediator hears why the couple have opted for mediation, what their expectations are from mediation and what issues they need to discuss in order to reach agreement. The couple then create their own agenda of issues for negotiation.

Issues for family mediation frequently include:

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

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

When the couple have reached agreement on the above issues, the mediator draws up a Note of Mediated Agreement in everyday language. The couple can then take the Note of Mediated Agreement to their respective solicitors to be drawn up into a legal Separation Agreement. Family mediation may take from two to six sessions to complete. At the end of the process couples are invited to bring their children along to explain the future arrangements agreed so that children are reassured both parents continue to have their best interests at heart.

The Family Mediation Service has a total number of fourteen centres nationally. The Agency also approved the establishment of two further centres, one in Letterkenny and the other in Portlaoise. It is anticipated that these will open in 2006. The Family Support Agency now has full-time Family Mediation Service centres in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Limerick and part-time Family Mediation Service centres in Athlone, Blanchardstown, Castlebar, Dundalk, Marino, Sligo, Tallaght, Tralee, Waterford and Wexford. The Family Mediation Service is planning to relocate its Athlone, Wexford, Waterford and Marino offices to larger premises.

In the past 12 months it is interesting to note that the Mediation Service has received enquiries about the Service's availability to work with different types of family disputes – such as care of elderly parents, re-establishment of contact and communication between parents and adult children, property disputes between siblings and parents and inter family disputes over wills.

FMS Offices in Ireland



Statistical Data

From 1986-1996 an average of 250 couples a year used the Family Mediation Service. The number using the Service has increased dramatically over the years. In the period January to December 2005, the Service helped 1430 couples. Of these 852 were helped to completion, a further 191 did not proceed after the intake session and the remaining couples are carried forward to 2006 and are continuing mediation. Full statistics for 2005 are given below:

Nationwide

No. of couples helped in 2005 (National Figure)	No. of couples who participated in the mediation process	No. of couples who did not proceed after intake
1430	852	191

2005	No. of couples participating in mediation	Reached agreement	Return to Marriage	Assisted but did not complete process
Total	852	459	45	348
Total in %	100%	54%	5%	41%

Eastern Region (Dublin, Tallaght, Dundalk, Wexford, Coolock and Blanchardstown)

2005	No. of couples participating in mediation	Reached agreement	Return to Marriage	Assisted but did not complete process
Total	439	250	17	172
Total in %	100%	57%	4%	39%

Galway Region (Galway, Athlone, Castlebar and Sligo)

2005	No. of couples participating in mediation	Reached agreement	Return to Marriage	Assisted but did not complete process
Total	168	86	13	69
Total in %	100%	51%	8%	41%

Limerick Region (Limerick and Tralee)

2005	No. of couples participating in mediation	Reached agreement	Return to Marriage	Assisted but did not complete process
Total	96	48	12	36
Total in %	100%	50%	12%	38%

Cork Region (Cork and Waterford)

2005	No. of couples participating in mediation	Reached agreement	Return to Marriage	Assisted but did not complete process
Total	149	75	3	71
Total in %	100%	50%	2%	48%

5.6 Research

In 2005 the Agency began the process of developing a strategy to address its remit to “undertake or commission research into matters related to its functions”. As a first step in fulfilling its research remit the Board of the Agency decided that research should be undertaken to:

- Review the 14 studies undertaken by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which represented the first phase of the Families Research Programme. (Responsibility for the Programme was delegated to the Agency as it was nearing completion).
- Review the Scheme of grants for counselling services administered by the Agency.

At the end of 2005, the review of phase 1 of the research programme had commenced. After an intensive selection process the preferred candidate to carry out the review of the Agency’s scheme of grants had been agreed upon and notification of their appointment had been issued.

The Agency has also developed its collaborative relationship with other organisations in the field of research. This collaboration included:

- Participation in Combat Poverty’s Research Advisory Committee which reviews the entire programme of research undertaken by that agency.

- Participation in research advisory committees on individual studies undertaken by other organisations, including studies ongoing in National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Combat Poverty.
- Participation in the Social Policy Network which facilitates contact between those involved in research in various government and non-governmental agencies.

In 2004 the Minister for Social and Family Affairs invoked his powers to request the Family Support Agency to undertake or commission research into "such other matters as the Minister may request". This request related to research in the area of post-separation non-accidental child deaths. The Agency established an expert working group comprising representatives from various agencies including the National Children's Office, Barnardos and The Central Mental Hospital. In 2005 the Group concluded its deliberations and wrote to the Minister advising him against carrying out such research.

Challenges for 2006

To further develop the Agency's research strategy in terms of:

- Continuing to review the Agency's direct services, with a view to ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of these services and, where appropriate, provide the basis for the provision of advice, information and assistance to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs in relation to the development of aspects of these functions.
- Implementing a process for commissioning research so that the Agency can gain the optimum value from its research budget.
- Identification of key research issues related to the Agency's functions on which research can be commissioned.

To enhance the Agency's collaborative research activities in terms of:

- Continued involvement in research activities of other organisations.
- Consideration of how to effectively involve stakeholders and other agencies in the research activities of the Family Support Agency.

5.7 Information

The Family Support Agency has a key role in promoting and disseminating information about issues in relation to marriage and relationships education, family mediation, parenting and family responsibilities and related matters. In meeting these responsibilities, the Agency promotes the value of support services for families and will heighten public awareness of these support services. This role includes co-operating with other public authorities in providing information to assist persons in balancing their work and family responsibilities.

- **Strategic Plan** – The Agency published its first Strategic Plan, covering 2004 to 2006, in May 2004. The Strategy, which was developed in consultation with stakeholders, has a strong family focus and is grounded in a firm belief in social inclusion and the fundamental importance of families and family life for individuals, communities and society generally. It takes account of Government policy, in particular social inclusion policy as set out in the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion.
- **Information Provision** – Throughout 2005 the Family Support Agency worked closely with other organisations (statutory and non-statutory) in promoting and disseminating information on matters related to the Agency's functions.

An Information leaflet on the different strands of the Agency was published.

- **Media, Presentations and Submissions** – The Agency contributed articles to a number of publications including the Department of Social and Family Affairs' magazine "Options and Opportunities" and gave press, radio and television interviews on matters related to its functions. The Agency also made submissions to the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution "Family Rights in the Constitution" and to the joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs on the services of the Family Support Agency. In addition the Agency made presentations at conferences. To coincide with the openings of new Family Resource Centres we issued press releases highlighting the services available at those centres.

- **Website** – The Agency introduced its website in December 2005 – website: www.fsa.ie. The website provides information about the Agency and the services it offers, electronic copies of publications, leaflets and reports are available. Under Counselling Grants for Voluntary Organisations the application process is outlined and under Family Resource Centre Programme the Guidelines for that programme are set out. The information leaflets of the Family Mediation Service are of particular use to parents who are separating as these leaflets give information on “How children react to separation and divorce” “We are separating – What do we tell the children?” and “What is a parenting plan?”. The research findings from the first phase of the Research programme commenced by the Family Affairs Unit are available on the website.
- The Family Support Agency wishes to acknowledge the support of the Department of Social and Family Affairs in developing the website.
- In October the Agency was informed that the Freedom of Information Act would apply to the Agency. Work on the Reference Book to Section 15 and 16 is nearing completion. This will go on the website in 2006.

5.8 Policy

In 2005 the Family Support Agency made a number of key interventions in the relevant policy areas. The following details the nature and areas on which such interventions were made.

Submissions

- Submission to the All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution.
- Submission to the 28th Session of the Council of European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs.
- Submission on the European Commission Green Paper on applicable law and jurisdiction in divorce matters.
- Submission to the Legal Aid Board in response to its draft Corporate Plan.

- Submission to the Inter-departmental Steering Group reviewing Government policy to assist those parenting alone.
- Submission to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs on childcare and early education, in the context of the experience of Family Resource Centres.

Advocacy

April 2005 – All-party Committee Hearing on the Constitution.

July 2005 – Hearing before the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Social and Family Affairs.





Appendices



Appendix 1

Board Meetings in 2005 and Board Sub-Groups

1. Board Meetings

31st of January	28th of February
4th of April	25th of April
30th of May	27th of June
25th of July	19th of September
24th of October	28th of November
15th of December	

2. Board Sub-Groups

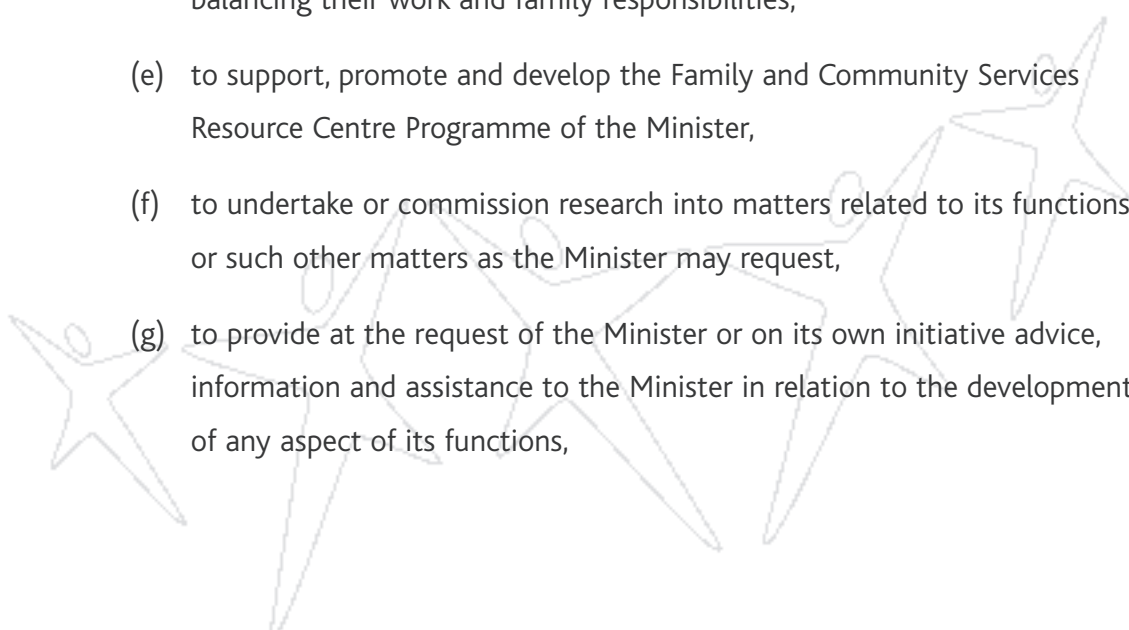
Sub-Group	Members
Audit Committee	Muriel Walls (Chair.), Paddie Connellan, Margaret Farrell, Dick Hickey, Brendan Murphy, Angela Gaule, Helen Faughnan
Counselling	Colm O'Connor (Chair.), Rita Hayes, Dick Hickey, Brendan Murphy, Dilly O'Brien, Bríd Rocks
Family Mediation Service	Clare Cashman (Chair.), Paddie Connellan, Geoffrey Corry, Angela Gaule, Rita Hayes, Dick Hickey, Colm O'Connor, Bríd Rocks
Family Resource Centre	Bríd Rocks (Chair.), Clare Cashman, Helen Faughnan, Programme Ciara Doyle (Drop In Well FRC), Fiona O'Grady (South & Mid-West Support Agency), Ceri Goddard (Combat Poverty Agency), John Fitzsimons (St. Andrews Resource Centre), Fiona Gallagher (Dúnraith Support Agency)
Review of FRC Pay/Conditions	Clare Cashman (Chair.), Helen Faughnan, Dick Hickey, Colm O'Connor, Bríd Rocks
Oireachtas Committee	Michael O'Kennedy (Chair.), Muriel Walls, Pat Bennett
Research	Colm O'Connor (Chair.), Clare Cashman, Paddie Connellan, Helen Faughnan, Rita Hayes, Gerry Mangan, Dilly O'Brien
Strategic Planning	Dick Hickey (Chair.), Paddie Connellan, Angela Gaule, Bríd Rocks

Appendix 2

Statutory Functions

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

4. (1) The functions of the Agency shall be:
 - (a) to provide a family mediation service,
 - (b) to provide, where the Agency considers it necessary or expedient:
 - (i) family mediation through such other persons as it considers appropriate,
 - (ii) training in family mediation, either by itself or such other persons as it considers appropriate,
 - (c) to support, promote and develop the provision of marriage and relationship counselling and family support services,
 - (d) to promote and disseminate information about issues in relation to marriage and relationships education, family mediation, parenting and family responsibilities and related matters and in this regard to co-operate with other public authorities in providing information to assist persons in balancing their work and family responsibilities,
 - (e) to support, promote and develop the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme of the Minister,
 - (f) to undertake or commission research into matters related to its functions or such other matters as the Minister may request,
 - (g) to provide at the request of the Minister or on its own initiative advice, information and assistance to the Minister in relation to the development of any aspect of its functions,



- (h) to provide, subject to the consent of the Minister, and in accordance with criteria established under section 7, financial assistance to voluntary bodies in respect of any matter related to the Agency's functions and for this purpose to administer:
 - (i) the scheme of the Minister known as the Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations providing Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services.
 - (ii) the programme of the Minister known as the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, and
 - (iii) such other schemes, grants and other facilities for financial assistance as may, from time to time, be authorised by the Minister after consultation with the Minister for Finance,
 - (i) to prepare strategic plans in accordance with section 9,
 - (j) to perform any additional functions assigned to the Agency under section 5.
4. (2) The Agency in performing the functions conferred on it by or under this Act shall have regard to:
- (a) the need to assist in particular, persons involved in the process of separation or divorce to reach agreement where possible, especially in disputes involving children.
 - (b) the need for co-operation with other relevant public authorities and voluntary bodies.
 - (c) Government policy in particular social inclusion policy.
4. (3) The Agency shall have all such powers as are necessary for or incidental to the performance of its functions under this Act.

Appendix 3

Organisational Structure and Staffing

Pat Bennett Chief Executive

1. Corporate Services

Bill O'Dea AP
Deirdre Fradl HEO

2. Research

Aideen Mooney AP

3. Information

Mary Lloyd AP

4. Counselling Grants and Family Resource Centres

Christina O'Connor AP

Counselling Grants

Olive Shanley HEO
Marian Finn EO
Imelda Martin CO

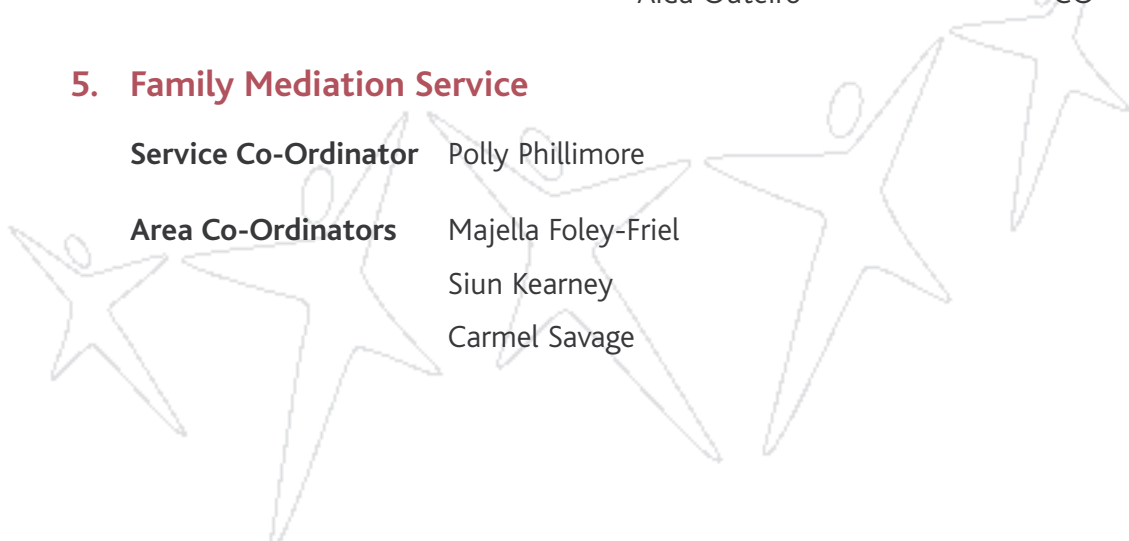
Family Resource Centres

Rita Fitzsimons HEO
Kevin Casey EO
Sarah Ironside CO
Aida Outeiro CO

5. Family Mediation Service

Service Co-Ordinator Polly Phillimore

Area Co-Ordinators Majella Foley-Friel
Siun Kearney
Carmel Savage



Mediators

Bernadette Barry-Murray	Eimear Hayden	Yvette O'Malley-Quigley
Geoffrey Corry	Marie Keely	Ann O'Kelly
Ann Doran	Martin Long	Karen Quirk
Patricia Fleming	Fiona McAuslan	Anna Slattery
Claudia Greene	Julie McAuliffe	Delma Sweeney
Rosemary Hanratty	Jane McColgan	Jim Sykes
Sheila Healy	Lyle McElderry	

Administration

Anne O'Riordan HEO	Niamh Egan SO
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Clerical Officers

Hazel Balding	Margaret Farrell	Noreen Mullin	Geraldine O'Halloran
Sheila Murphy	Marie Geraghty	Sandra Murphy	Mary O'Sullivan
Ann Connor	Michelle Henry	Evelyn McGarrigle	Anne Troy
Martina Doyle	Sandra Moran	Antoinette O'Donovan	



Appendix 4

Premises

Family Support Agency's Headquarters

Floor 4, St. Stephens Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2

Phone: 01 6114100

Full-time Family Mediation Service Offices

Cork

Hibernian House, 80A South Mall, Cork

Phone: 021 4252200

Dublin

Floor 1, St Stephens Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2

Phone: 01 6344320

Galway

Floor 1, Ross House, Merchants Road, Galway

Phone: 091 509730

Limerick

Floor 1, Mill House, Henry Street, Limerick

Phone: 061 214310

Part Time Family Mediation Service Offices

Athlone

Inish Carraig, Athlone, Co Westmeath

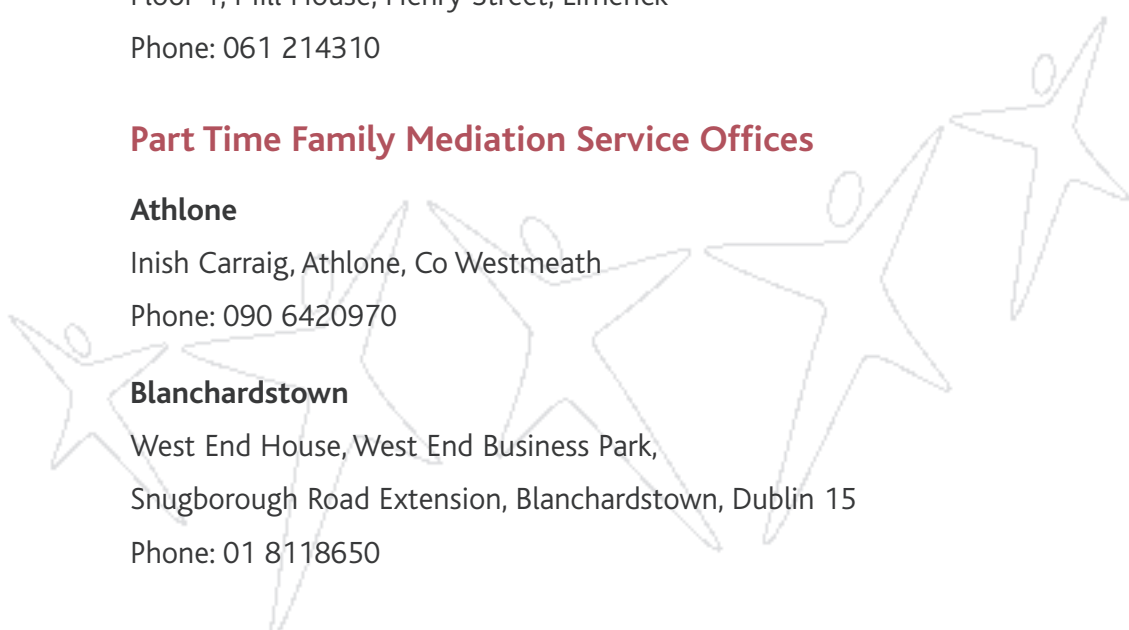
Phone: 090 6420970

Blanchardstown

West End House, West End Business Park,

Snugborough Road Extension, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Phone: 01 8118650



Castlebar

C/o Family Centre, Chapel Street, Castlebar, Co Mayo

Phone: 094 9035120

Dundalk

Millennium Centre, St Alphonsus Road, Dundalk, Co Louth

Phone: 042 9359410

Marino/Coolock

C/o ACCORD Office, 71 Griffith Avenue, Marino, Dublin 9

Phone: 01 8186050

Sligo

Abbey Street, Sligo

Phone: 071 9137430

Tallaght

The Rere, Tallaght Social Services Centre, The Square, Tallaght, Dublin 24

Phone: 01 4145180

Tralee

Unit 2, Market Place, Maine Street, Tralee, Co Kerry

Phone: 066 7186100

Waterford

14 Gladstone Street, Waterford

Phone: 051 860460

Wexford

Selskar Court, Selskar, Wexford

Phone: 053 63050



Appendix 5

2005 Report and Financial Statements

Contents	Section
Information	1
Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General	2
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Income and Expenditure Account	6
Balance Sheet	7
Notes to the Financial Statements	8

To the Minister for Social and Family Affairs

In accordance with the terms of Section 25 of the Family Support Agency Act, 2001, the Family Support Agency ("the Agency") presents its Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2005.



1. Information

Members of the Board

Ms. Clare Cashman
 Ms. Paddie Connellan
 Mr. Geoffrey Corry
 Ms. Helen Faughnan
 Ms. Rita Hayes
 Mr. Dick Hickey
 Ms. Dilly O'Brien
 Dr. Colm O'Connor
 Mr. Michael O'Kennedy (Chairperson)
 Ms. Bríd Rocks
 Ms. Muriel Walls

Chief Executive

Mr. Pat Bennett

Headquarters

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

Auditor

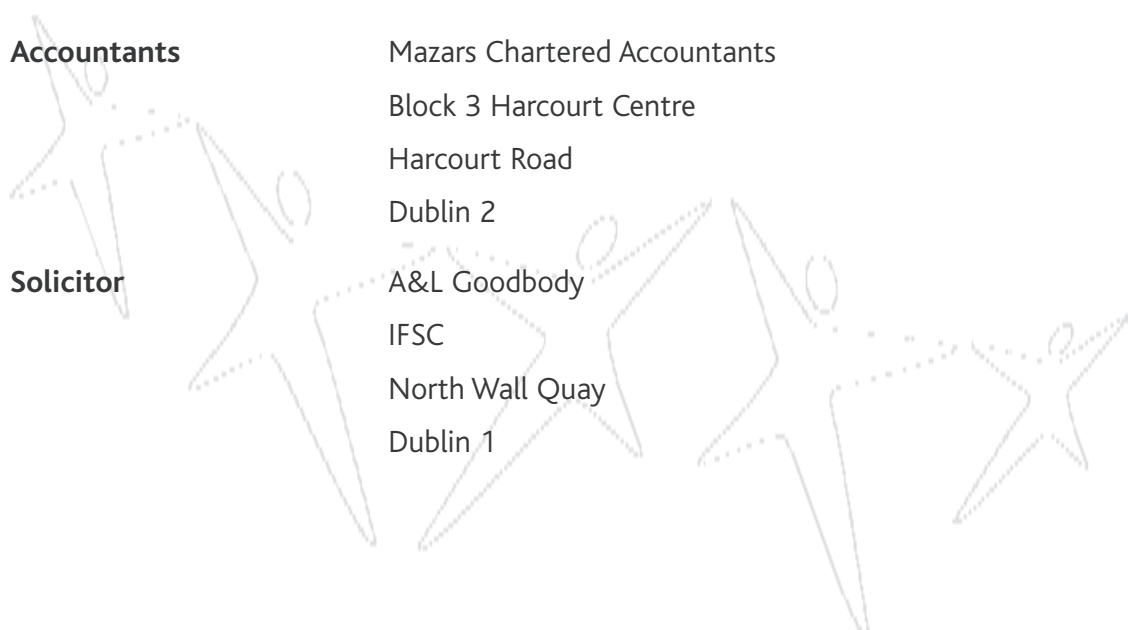
Comptroller and Auditor General
 Dublin Castle
 Dublin 2

Accountants

Mazars Chartered Accountants
 Block 3 Harcourt Centre
 Harcourt Road
 Dublin 2

Solicitor

A&L Goodbody
 IFSC
 North Wall Quay
 Dublin 1



2. Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

I have audited the financial statements of the Family Support Agency (the Agency) for the year ended 31 December 2005 under Section 25 of the Family Support Agency Act, 2001.

The financial statements, which have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein, comprise the Accounting Policies, the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and the related notes.

Respective Responsibilities of the Agency and the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Agency is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with the Act and for ensuring the regularity of transactions. The Agency prepares the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. The accounting responsibilities of the Board of the Agency are set out in the Statement of Responsibilities.

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

I report my opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. I also report whether in my opinion proper books of account have been kept. In addition, I state whether the financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

I report any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions do not conform to the authorities governing them.

I also report if I have not obtained all the information and explanations necessary for the purposes of my audit.

Basis of Audit Opinion

In the exercise of my function as Comptroller and Auditor General, I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board and by reference to the special considerations that attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures and regularity of the financial transactions included in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Agency's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming my opinion I also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of the Agency's affairs at 31 December 2005 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

In my opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Agency. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.



John Purcell

Comptroller and Auditor General

20th July 2007

3. Statement of Responsibilities of the Board

Section 25 of the Family Support Agency Act 2001, requires the Chief Executive and the Members of the Board, on behalf of the Agency, to prepare Financial Statements in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. In preparing those financial statements, the Chief Executive and the Board, on behalf of the Agency, are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Agency will continue in operation.

The Chief Executive under the direction of the Board of the Agency is responsible for keeping proper books of account, which disclose in a true and fair manner at any time the financial position of the Agency and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 25 of the Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Agency and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.



Chairperson, on behalf of the Board

24 September 2006



Chief Executive

24 September 2006



4. Statement of Accounting Policies

The significant accounting policies adopted in these financial statements are as follows:

Basis of Accounting

The financial statements are prepared on the accruals basis of accounting in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and under the historical cost convention and comply with the financial reporting standards of the Accounting Standards Board and are in the form approved by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. The accounts are stated in euro.

Oireachtas Grant

Oireachtas Grant represents the total payments made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on behalf of the Agency in the period of account.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Depreciation is provided on a straight line basis at rates which are estimated to reduce the assets to realisable values by the end of their expected useful lives as follows:

Furniture & fittings	10% per annum
Office equipment	10% per annum
Computer equipment	20% per annum

Foreign Currencies

Transactions denominated in foreign currencies are translated into euro at the rates of exchange prevailing at the accounting date and are included in the Income and Expenditure Account for the year. The difference arising on translation between transaction dates and payment dates are charged to the Income and Expenditure account.

Capital Account

The capital account represents the unamortised amount of income used to finance fixed assets.

Staff Pensions

In accordance with Section 17 of the Family Support Agency Act 2001 a draft pension scheme, in respect of employees of the Agency, has been submitted to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs for his approval. The remaining staff are Civil Servants on secondment from the Department and are covered by Civil Service pension arrangements.

5. Statement on System of Internal Financial Control

Responsibility for the System of Internal Financial Control

On behalf of the Family Support Agency, we acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated.

The system can only provide reasonable, and not absolute, assurance that the assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded and that material errors or other irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely period.

Key control procedures

The Agency was established under the Family Support Agency Act 2001 and commenced on May 6, 2003. Since then the Agency has taken initial steps to ensure an appropriate control environment by:

- ensuring compliance with its financial obligations under the Act
- ensuring that the assets of the Agency are properly safeguarded
- clearly defining management responsibilities in a defined organisational structure with clear segregation of duties and
- the establishment of appropriate sub-committees of the Board to give greater focus on specific areas.

The Board has plans to identify and evaluate organisational risks by commissioning a risk assessment of the organisation in the near future which will:

- identify the significant strategic, operational and financial risks to the organisation
- assess the appropriateness and strength of management controls surrounding risk areas
- highlight key risk areas for specific management attention and Internal Audit focus.

Following on from this process formal procedures will be formulated and implemented to facilitate the reporting of significant control failures and taking appropriate control action, including the establishment of an Internal Audit function.

The Agency is fully dependent on the accounts and payroll systems of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. In that respect, the Agency is required to comply with control procedures operating within the Department. The separation of the processing and payment function from the Agency has led to difficulty in sourcing supporting documentation for certain areas of Agency expenditure.

The system of internal financial control within the Agency is based on a framework of monthly management information, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties and authorisation limits) and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular it includes:

- a budgeting system with an annual budget, which is profiled for the year and reviewed and agreed with the Executive and the Board prior to presentation to the Department of Social and Family Affairs
- regular review by the Executive and the Board of expenditure reports which indicate financial performance against budget
- regular review by the Executive and the Board of financial reports and key operational indicators and
- clearly defined procurement, tendering and capital investment guidelines.

As noted above, the Board intends to commission a risk review to assess the key risk areas and control weaknesses of the organisation, in accordance with best practice, as a first step in the establishment of a formal Internal Audit function. The findings and recommendations of this risk review will serve to form the basis of a cyclical internal audit plan to review in detail the key risks of the organisation.

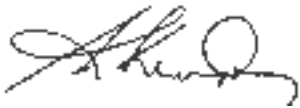
The Board's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the Executive who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the financial control framework. Once in place, the Internal Audit function will also have a role to play in the monitoring and review of internal financial control effectiveness.

Annual Review of Controls

The Board has not to date conducted a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control; however it considers that the significant progress made to date toward the establishment of an appropriate system of governance and the steps being formulated toward the establishment of an Internal Audit function will serve to provide assurance as to the effectiveness of the financial control environment going forward.

Information about weaknesses in controls

The Agency did not suffer any material loss in the year ended 31 December 2005 arising out of weaknesses in the system of internal financial control, which would result in the inclusion of any provision, contingency or uncertainty in the financial statements for the year.



Chairperson

24 September 2006



Chief Executive

24 September 2006



6. Income and Expenditure Account

for the year ended 31 December 2005

	Notes	2005 €	2004 €
Income			
Oireachtas Grant		22,564,718	19,357,458
Transfer to Capital Account	8	(461,904)	(5,412)
		22,102,814	19,352,046
Expenditure			
Financial Support Grants	1	18,680,385	15,626,570
Payroll Costs	2	1,872,004	1,828,356
Directors' Expenses	3	89,085	50,103
Administration Expenses	4	1,454,451	1,375,872
		22,095,925	18,880,901
Excess of Income over Expenditure		6,889	471,145

The Family Support Agency had no gains or losses in the financial year other than those dealt with in the Income and Expenditure Account.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 11 form an integral part of these financial statements.



Chairperson

24 September 2006



Chief Executive

24 September 2006

7. Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2005

	Notes	2005 €	2004 €
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets	5	558,557	461,038
Works in Progress	5	364,385	–
		<u>922,942</u>	461,038
Current Assets			
Debtors & Prepayments	6	1,162,377	813,575
Creditors (amounts falling due within one year)	7	<u>(854,463)</u>	(512,550)
Net Current Assets		<u>307,914</u>	301,025
Total assets		<u>1,230,856</u>	762,063
Financed By			
Income and Expenditure Account		307,914	301,025
Capital Account	8	922,942	461,038
		<u>1,230,856</u>	762,063

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 11 form an integral part of these financial statements.



Chairperson

24 September 2006



Chief Executive

24 September 2006

8. Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Financial Support Grants

	2005 €	2004 €
Counselling Grants	8,392,300	7,643,246
Grants to Family Resource Centres (FRC)	10,288,085	7,983,324
	<u>18,680,385</u>	<u>15,626,570</u>

2. Payroll Expenditure

	2005 €	2004 €
Wages & Salaries	1,761,448	1,696,531
Travel & Subsistence	110,556	131,825
	<u>1,872,004</u>	<u>1,828,356</u>
Staff employed	63	55

3. Directors' Expenses

	2005 €	2004 €
Directors' Fees	54,743	48,247
Travel & Subsistence	34,342	1,856
	<u>89,085</u>	<u>50,103</u>



4. Administration Expenses

	2005	2004
	€	€
Training	13,680	13,230
Rent	629,717	536,352
Service Charges	100,623	110,655
Insurance	44,676	26,130
Maintenance	48,067	73,124
Security	1,844	5,056
Cleaning	40,672	35,979
Telephone	44,426	51,299
Electricity	24,040	30,158
Publications	–	1,612
Stationery	30,286	61,517
Advertising	44,908	55,078
Consultancy	202,449	143,120
Accounting	29,920	50,558
Audit	10,000	10,000
Conferences	64,776	63,788
Depreciation	98,663	76,072
Food and Beverages	9,063	8,129
Subscriptions	7,836	4,881
Miscellaneous	6,603	11,588
Postage	2,202	7,546
	1,454,451	1,375,872



5. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Computer Equipment €	Fixtures & Fittings €	Office Equipment €	Total €
Cost				
Opening Balance	175,625	312,399	97,076	585,100
Additions during year	29,732	150,797	15,653	196,182
At 31 December 2005	<u>205,357</u>	<u>463,196</u>	<u>112,729</u>	<u>781,282</u>
Depreciation				
Opening Balance	59,160	49,910	14,992	124,062
Charge for year	41,071	46,319	11,273	98,663
At 31 December 2005	<u>100,231</u>	<u>96,229</u>	<u>26,265</u>	<u>222,725</u>
Net Book Value				
At 31 December 2004	<u>116,465</u>	<u>262,489</u>	<u>82,084</u>	<u>461,038</u>
At 31 December 2005	<u>105,126</u>	<u>366,967</u>	<u>86,464</u>	<u>558,557</u>

The works in progress figure is made up of €251,044 fit out costs for FRC premises in Athlone and Waterford and €113,341 for computer software development costs not completed at 31 December 2005.

6. Debtors

Amounts falling due within one year	2005 €	2004 €
FRC Grant Prepayments	1,121,564	791,705
Other Prepayments	40,813	21,870
	<u>1,162,377</u>	<u>813,575</u>

7. Creditors

Amounts falling due within one year	2005 €	2004 €
Rental Accruals	507,970	280,856
Service Charge Accruals	100,172	86,461
Other Accruals	246,321	145,233
	<u>854,463</u>	<u>512,550</u>

8. Capital Account

	2005 €	2004 €
Opening Balance	<u>461,038</u>	<u>455,626</u>
Income used to acquire Fixed Assets	560,567	81,485
Amortisation in line with asset depreciation	<u>(98,663)</u>	<u>(76,073)</u>
Transfer from Income and Expenditure Account	461,904	5,412
Closing Balance at 31 December	<u>922,942</u>	<u>461,038</u>

9. Contingent Liabilities

There is one legal action pending not covered by the Agency's insurance policy. In light of this, and with the agreement of the Department of Finance, the claim is being managed by the State Claims Agency on behalf of the Agency and the Minister for Social and Family Affairs.

10. Accommodation

The Headquarters occupied by the Agency at Floor 4, St Stephens Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2 was leased from the Office of Public Works in 2003 for a period of eleven and a half years. The current annual rental charge is €215,350 per annum. The Family Mediation Service, which is under the aegis of the FSA, operated from 20 rented premises throughout the country in 2005 at a total charge for the year of €405,372.

11. Approval of Financial Statements

The Financial Statements were approved by the Board on 24 September 2006.



Family Support Agency

