

Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme



**SPEAK FRC
National Database:**

Trends 2004-2007



Family Support Agency



Introduction

The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme

In 1994, to mark the International Year of the Family, an allocation of €317,435 was made available to the Department of Social Welfare to fund a number of Family Resource Centres (FRCs). This decision was motivated by the perception of a possible gap in statutory support for community development activities focused on support for families and tackling child poverty. Ten FRCs were funded on a 3 year pilot basis. This funding allowed the FRCs to focus on developing the skill levels and capacities of their local communities, to encourage communities to become self reliant and self directed.

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

The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme provides financial assistance to FRCs to assist with the staffing and equipping of premises which provide a focal point for community development activities. There are now 106 FRCs in receipt of core funding in the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme.

Since May 2003 the Family Support Agency has overall responsibility for management of the programme, including monitoring of centres, financial administration and executive decision making.

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

The services provided and activities supported by FRCs are designed to meet the needs of the local community. They include:

- the provision of information, advice and support to target groups and families in the area.
- practical assistance to community groups such as the provision of access to information technology and office facilities.
- the provision of education courses and training opportunities.

- the provision of childcare facilities for those attending courses provided by the FRC.
- the running of after-school clubs.
- the establishment of new community groups, networks and initiatives to meet local needs.
- contributing to relevant social policy fora.

Origin of Data Informing this Report

This report is based on information taken from returns made by Family Resource Centre staff, voluntary management committee members and other volunteers to the SPEAK (Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge-networking) system during 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Information provided by each FRC through SPEAK is collated into a national programme database.

Due to the continued expansion of the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme the number of FRCs completing SPEAK returns has grown each year.

Table 1: Number of SPEAK Returns entered into National Database by year

Year	Number of SPEAK Returns entered into National Database
2004	62
2005	64
2006	68
2007	83

With the number of datasets contained in the national programme database increasing each year, this report, where possible, uses average values for each year in order to make comparisons between years.

This report is intended as a companion document to the report entitled *Resources, Activities, Partners & Achievements, 2007*, and seeks to augment the data presented in that report with a multi-annual comparative analysis of many of its more prominent themes.

Family Resource Centre Resources and Funding

Core funding, granted by the Family Support Agency, is the principle source of funding for Family Resource Centres. As a general rule, this funding is used to cover the cost of core-staff as well as costs associated with maintaining a Family Resource Centre (including rent, insurance and operating overheads). In order to achieve the goals set out in their Three Year Work Plans, FRCs rely on funds accessed from a variety of sources.

Table 2: Family Resource Centre Funding - All Sources, 2004-2007

Funding Source	2004 62 FRCs	2005 64 FRCs	2006 68 FRCs	2007 83 FRCs
FSA Core Funding	32% €5,229,391	36% €6,475,505	39% €8,666,447	41% €13,210,943
Health Service Executive	11% €1,736,011	9% €1,611,365	7.5% €1,701,553	6% €1,954,435
FÁS	21% €3,381,155	22% €3,956,462	19.5% €4,354,442	16% €5,132,489
Area Based Partnerships	1.5% €251,663	1.5% €280,675	1.5% €348,669	1.5% €459,760
VEC	0.5% €55,428	1% €209,015	1% €241,957	1% €260,244
Local Authorities	0.5% €111,077	1.5% €274,252	1% €197,545	3% €918,852
National Programmes	8.5% €1,374,265	11% €1,990,030	11% €2,433,409	12% €3,855,829
EU Funding	4.5% €706,563	3% €515,776	2% €437,550	6.5% €2,025,561
Other Funding	20.5% €3,348,840	15% €2,757,173	17.5% €3,956,730	13% €4,224,607
Total	100% €16,194,393	100% €18,070,253	100% €22,338,302	100% €32,042,720

Table 2, above, demonstrates that the 83 FRCs that contributed to the SPEAK national programme database during 2007 received just over €13.2 million in core funding for that year. In the same year, FRCs generated a further €19.2 million from other sources. Total budgets administered through FRCs, therefore, amounted to just over €32 million.

During the period 2004 to 2007 the total funding administered through FRCs has nearly doubled from €16.2 million in 2004 to €32 million in 2007.

Core funding committed by the Family Support Agency to the programme has grown in real terms, from €5.2 million in 2004 to €13.2 million in 2007, and also as a percentage of total funding administered through FRCs. This increase can be accredited to two factors. Firstly, the establishment of a capital funding scheme within the programme. In 2007, 6 FRCs received capital funding totalling approximately €2.5 million. Secondly, during 2006 and 2007, many FRCs received funding to expand their core-staff to include development workers.

Table 3, below, outlines the average funding received by FRCs each year over the period 2004 – 2007.

Table 3: Average Funding per FRC - All Sources, 2004-2007

Funding Source	2004 €	2005 €	2006 €	2007 €
Family Support Agency	84,345	101,179	127,447	159,167
Health Service Executive	28,000	25,178	25,022	23,547
FÁS	54,535	61,820	64,036	61,837
Area Based Partnerships	4,059	4,386	5,127	5,539
VEC	894	3,266	3,558	3,135
Local Authorities	1,792	4,285	2,905	11,070
National Programmes	22,166	31,094	35,785	46,455
EU Funding	11,396	8,059	6,434	24,404
Other Funding	54,014	43,081	58,187	50,899
Total	261,200	282,348	328,504	386,057

It is evident from this table that the average budget administered by FRCs (both core funding and non-core funding) is growing from year to year. The ability of FRCs to source and administer funding from such a variety of sources is key to the successful implementation of FRC Three Year Work Plans.

Since 2004, average FRC funding sourced from National Programmes and from the European Union has grown considerably. Average funding received from the Health Service Executive has been in decline since 2004, while funding received from FÁS peaked in 2006.

Each FRC is managed by a voluntary management committee comprising local people. Each of these voluntary management committee members fulfils the role of company director for the FRC. In 2004, 1368 people acted as voluntary company directors in the 62 FRCs that completed SPEAK returns. In 2007, this figure had grown to 1623 people across 83 FRCs. These figures represent a slight decrease in the average number of voluntary company directors per FRC (down from 12 per FRC in 2004 to 11 per FRC in 2007).

There were 216 staff (filling 179 full-time positions) funded by the Family Support Agency within the participating 83 FRCs in 2007. This is an average of 2.2 core funded staff per FRC. This represents an increase from an average 1.9 core funded staff members per FRC in 2004, 2005 and 2006. This increase is likely to be the result of the recruitment of development workers within many FRCs.

Alongside staff funded through core funding, FRCs also employ staff funded through other sources. In 2007, 705 full-time positions were filled within FRCs with funding made available through a variety of sources (notably the FÁS CE Scheme, the FÁS Rural Social Scheme and childcare programmes). This equates to 8.5 full-time positions per FRC. The corresponding figure in 2004 was 6.5 full-time positions.

Trends in Work of FRCs, 2004 to 2007

INTRODUCTION

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

1. The extent to which they provide points of *Contact and Participation* for the most excluded sections of communities – this encompasses provision of information and resources to individuals and groups.
2. The extent to which they offer a route for further personal *Progression* for people in their communities – via provision of training and education.
3. The extent to which they *Promote Self-Reliance and Autonomy* contributing to the local community development infrastructure by helping groups, and establishing groups or networks.
4. The extent to which they provide an important source of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of social exclusion, and can make a positive contribution to *Building Partnerships and Influencing Policy* through networking and policy work.

ENHANCING CONTACT AND PARTICIPATION

PROVIDING INFORMATION, REFERRALS AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

'Providing Information' refers to the time spent by FRCs providing information, advice and advocacy to individuals within the community. Typically, this might relate to employment, enterprise, social welfare entitlements or accessing services.

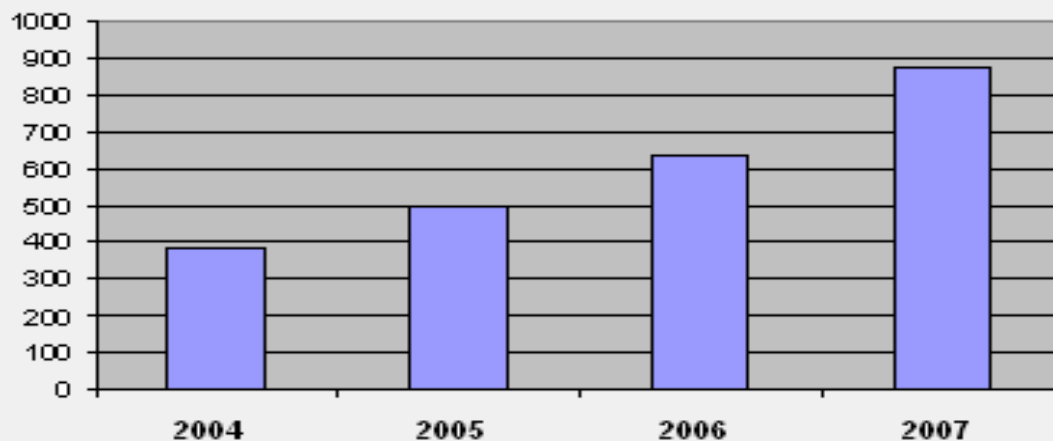
Figure 1: Average Number of People given Information per FRC, 2004-2007



Despite a small deviation in 2006, Figure 1 makes clear that the numbers receiving information from FRCs is steadily increasing. During 2004, the average FRC provided information to 1,427 people. By 2007, this figure has risen to 2,363 people.

As well as providing information themselves, FRCs also refer people onto other services where appropriate.

Figure 2: Average Number of Referrals Per FRC, 2004-2007



The average number of people being referred to other services and/or agencies has increased from 382 people per FRC in 2004 to 877 people per FRC in 2007.

Many FRCs, located within communities where no other counselling service exists, provide such a service themselves. The average number of people availing of an in-house counselling service has grown from 60 people per FRC in 2004 to an average of 96 people per FRC in 2007.

Due to difficulties accessing suitable premises, funding, and / or qualified counsellors, a waiting list to avail of these services exists in many FRCs. Since 2004, the number of people awaiting access to an in-house counselling service has fallen from an average of 14 people per FRC to an average of 8 people per FRC in 2007.

The sustained growth in the numbers of people accessing counselling services, information services, and being referred to other services and/or agencies, indicates that FRCs are strengthening their positions as focal points within their communities from year to year.

FRCs as a Route for Progression

The provision of education and training is not a core activity for FRCs. However, centres either directly provide, or arrange the provision of, education and training opportunities to the community. This normally occurs within three categories of provision:

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

Figure 3: Average Number of People Completing Courses Per FRC, 2004-2007

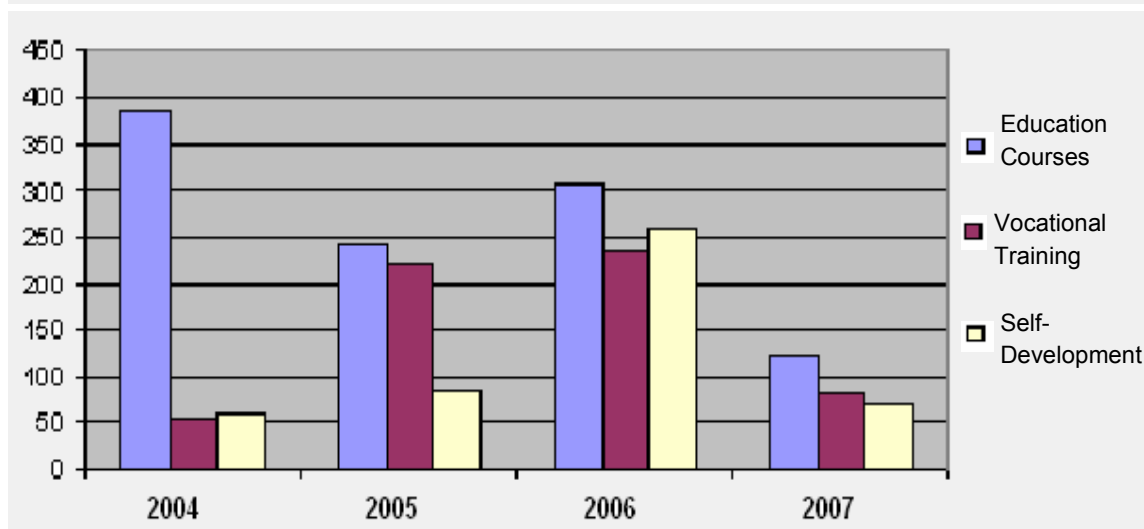


Figure 3, above, indicates an irregular pattern in the numbers of people completing education courses, vocational training and self-development courses hosted by FRCs. In 2004, an average of 499 people completed education and/or training within their local FRC. In 2007, this figure has fallen to an average of 275 people per FRC. Numbers peaked in 2006 with an average of 803 people completing a training and/or education course per FRC.

Contributing to Community Development Infrastructure

FRCs promote self-reliance and autonomy within their communities by contributing to the local community development infrastructure. This is achieved by helping existing community groups and establishing new groups or networks.

The nature of the help provided by FRCs to existing community groups and initiatives is categorised under three broad headings: help to access funding, help to develop an organisational structure and help to tackle a particular development / social policy issue.

Figure 4: Average Number of Existing Community Groups helped by FRCs, 2004—2007

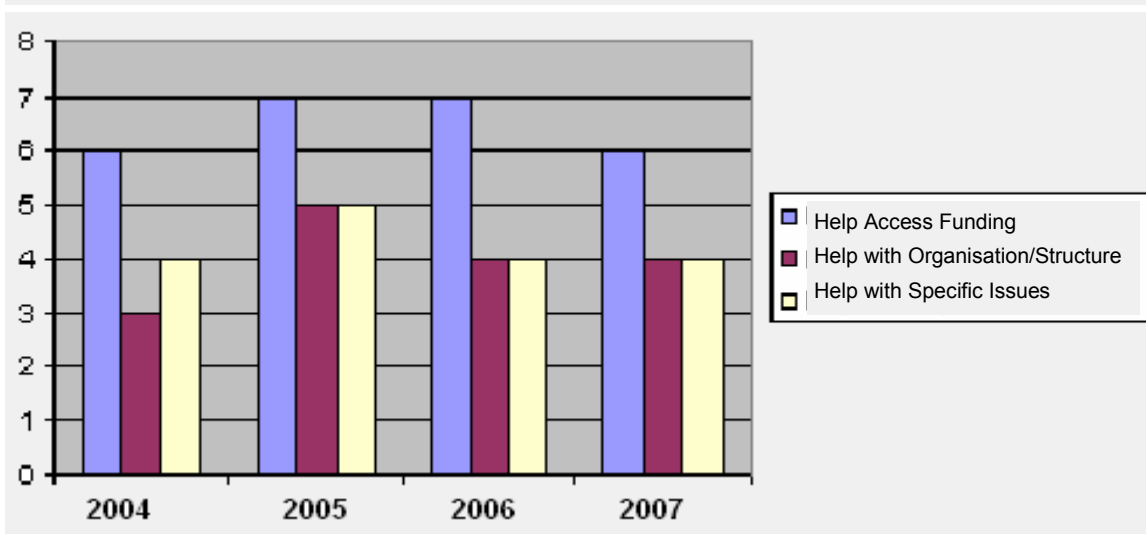


Figure 4, above, indicates that the level of support provided by FRCs to existing community groups has remained steady over the period 2004 to 2007. In 2004, the average FRC provided help to 13 existing groups and initiatives. This number peaked in 2005 (an average of 17 groups) and levelled off in 2006 and 2007 with assistance being provided to an average of 15 and 14 community groups respectively.

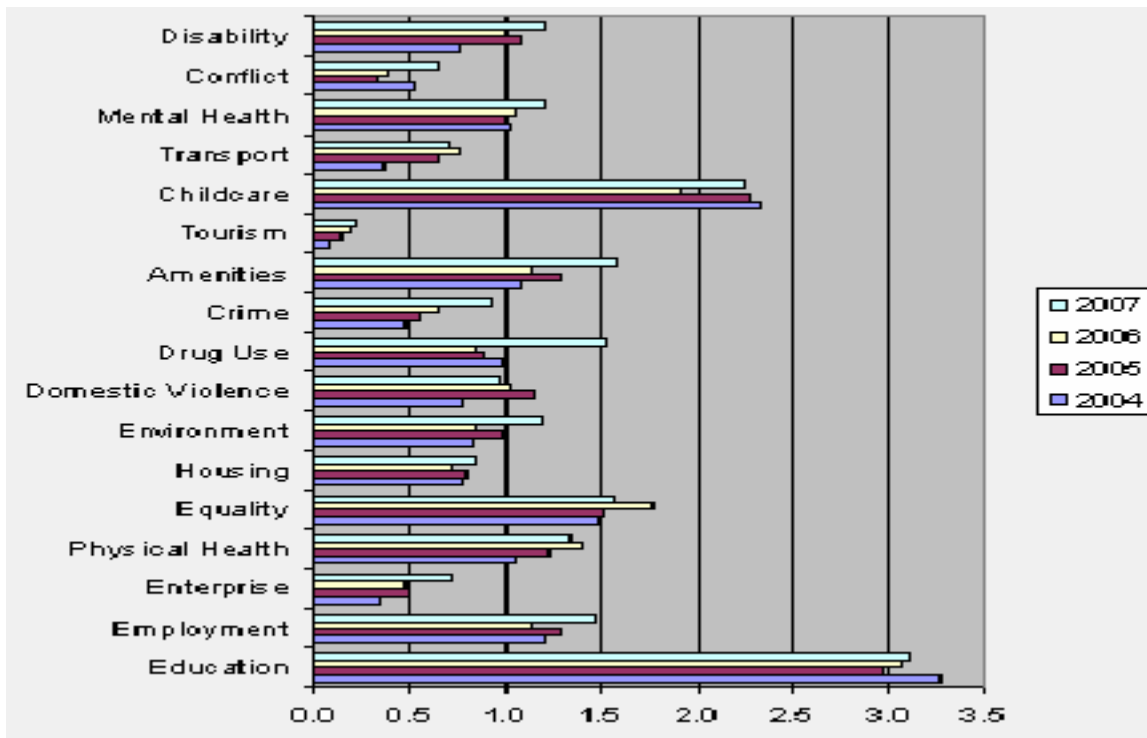
As well as providing help to existing community groups and initiatives, FRCs also establish new community groups and initiatives to meet identified local needs. In 2004, the average FRC facilitated the establishment of .02 new community groups or initiatives. This figure grew to an average of .37 new groups per FRC in 2007. This increase suggests that as FRCs become more established within their communities they are more likely to become aware of local needs that are not being addressed and respond accordingly.

Building Partnerships and Influencing Policy

FRCs commit resources to issues within the community that require collective responses. This work includes attendance at meetings, committee membership or other structured involvement in local community groups and committees.

Figure 5, below, illustrates the number of locally-based networks and committees in which the average FRC is involved per year. These figures confirm the importance placed on the issues of education, childcare and equality as networking themes.

Figure 5: Participation in Local Networks per Theme (Average Per FRC), 2004-2007

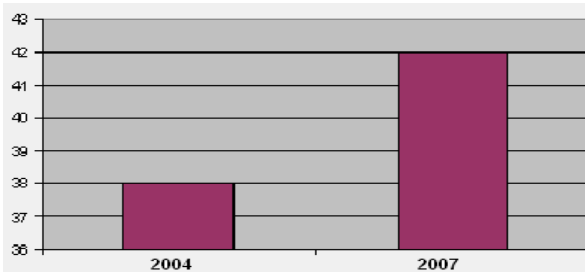


A pronounced rise in networking activity associated with drug use, providing amenities, the environment and employment is evident between 2006 and 2007. A sustained increase in networking associated with tackling crime is evident between 2004 and 2007.

An examination of the time committed by FRCs to policy work reveals that during 2007, the average FRC attended 20 seminars and conferences, participated in 11 regional or national networks and released 4 publications. FRCs' commitment to policy work has remained steady during the period 2005 to 2007. However, there has been a decline in participation in regional or national networks during this period - falling from an average per FRC of 14 regional or national networking events in 2005 to 11 in 2007.

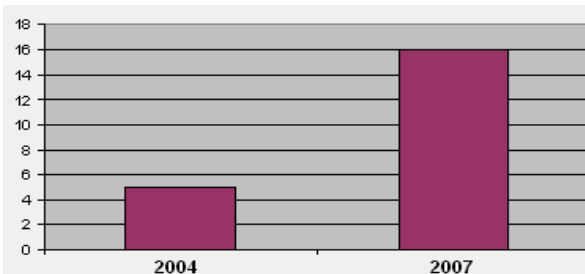
Trends in Issues and Challenges, 2004 - 2007

Figure 6: Percentage of FRCs identifying Childcare as a Challenge, 2004 and 2007



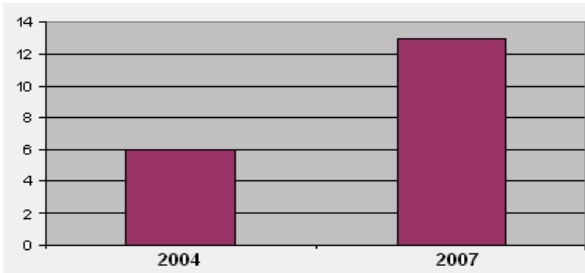
In 2004, 38% of FRCs listed the lack of accessible and affordable childcare as a challenge within their community. This figure grew to 42% in 2007. Over a third of these FRCs named the introduction of the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme as a major challenge.

Figure 7: Percentage of FRCs identifying Anti-social Behaviour as a Challenge, 2004 and 2007



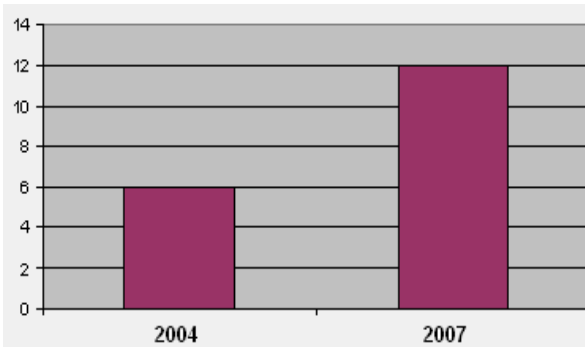
In 2004, only 5% of FRCs, identified anti-social behaviour as a challenge facing their communities. In 2007, the corresponding figure had more than tripled to 16%.

Figure 8: Percentage of FRCs identifying Transport as a Challenge, 2004 and 2007



The lack of accessible and affordable transport was named as a challenge by 6% in 2004. More than double that, 13%, had identified the lack of transport as a challenge in 2007.

Figure 9: Percentage of FRCs identifying Drugs/Alcohol Abuse as a Challenge, 2004 and 2007



Drug / alcohol abuse was identified as a challenge by 12% of FRCs in 2007. This represents a sharp increase on the 6% of FRCs that identified this issue as a challenge in 2004.



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Data contained in this report has been taken from the SPEAK FRC National Database. All data is intended to be as accurate and up-to-date as possible at time of publication.



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