



Family Support Agency

Family Support Agency

Annual Report 2013



Contents

1. Chairperson's Statement
2. Chief Executive's Report
3. Board
4. Role and Strategic Priorities
 - 4.1 Role
 - 4.2 Strategic Priorities
 - 4.2 Finance and Accounts
5. Work of the Agency in 2013
 - 5.1 Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme
 - 5.2 Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services
 - 5.3 Research
6. Appendices
 - Appendix 1 Board meetings in 2013 and Board Sub-Groups
 - Appendix 2 Statutory Functions
 - Appendix 3 Organisational Structure, Staffing and Premises



1. Chairperson's Statement

I am very pleased to present the Family Support Agency's 2013 Annual Report to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

I was appointed as Chairperson of the Family Support Agency (FSA) on the 1st of June 2013. However, membership of the new FSA board was not finalised until September 2013. In addition to its responsibilities in relation to the FSA, the new board was given responsibility for overseeing the establishment of the new Child and Family Agency in January 2014.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the previous board of the FSA which served up to June 2013 and was chaired by Ms. Sharon Foley.

The FSA's 2013 Annual Report demonstrates the Agency's continued commitment to the delivery of high quality support services to children, families and communities.

The community-based Family Resource Centres and Counselling Organisations supported by the FSA continue to provide accessible services to children, families and individuals in their communities. The Child and Family Agency will look to build on the significant strengths of these programmes in meeting its mandate for community-based early intervention and family support.

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

Ahead of the FSA's integration into the Child and Family Agency in January 2014, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have served as board members and staff of the FSA since 2003 for their commitment to the work of the Family Support Agency. I would like to thank the Minister and the officials of the Department for providing the support and resources which have facilitated the Agency in achieving its objectives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Norah Gibbons".

Norah Gibbons
Chairperson



2. Chief Executive's Report

In 2013 the Family Support Agency (FSA) continued to meet its statutory responsibility to support community-based organisations providing services to families, children and individuals. In addition to this, the Agency prioritised a number of key organisational and operational tasks that had to be completed ahead of its integration into the new Child and Family Agency in January 2014.

The FSA provided core funding of €14.31m to 106 Family Resource Centres operating in communities across the country in 2013. With services and activities designed to meet local community needs, these Centres play a key role in combating disadvantage and improving well-being within their community.

The Agency also provided funding of €8,147,000 to 618 voluntary organisations providing Marriage, Relationship, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services in local communities across the country. The funding provides support to community-based services in disadvantaged areas. These organisations also play a key role in combating disadvantage and improving well-being within communities.

With the support of the Irish Research Council, the Agency's Research Function completed and launched three research projects - Family Relationships and Family Well-being; Family Well-being in Difficult Times; Growing Up in a One-Parent Family.

As I mentioned above, a key priority for the Family Support Agency in 2013 was to ensure its readiness for integration into the new Child and Family Agency in January 2014. In addition to being a member of the Child and Family Agency Establishment Team, the FSA focused on a number of internal organisational and operational tasks which had to be completed. In all this work, a key priority for the FSA was to ensure that the value and role of its community-based family support services is highlighted and recognised.

As in previous years, all of the activities detailed above were supported by the work of the Agency's Corporate Services Section which is responsible for Human Resources, Information and Communication Technology, Accounts, Payroll and Facilities Management.

The progress achieved by the Family Support Agency since its establishment on the 6th of May 2003 would not have been possible without the support and commitment of many people. So, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all FSA Board Members and Staff (past and present) for their commitment to the work of the Agency over the last 10 years. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Minister and the officials of the Department.

Finally, to the service providers with whom we work, I thank you sincerely for your continued support and dedication to your communities.

Bill O'Dea

Bill O'Dea
Acting CEO



3. Board

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

Board	Meetings Attended
Chairperson	
Ms. Sharon Foley (to 31 May 2013)	5
Ms. Norah Gibbons (appointed 1 June 2013)	3
Members	
Ms. Marie Fenlon (1)	5
Mr. Dick Hickey (1)	5
Ms. Caroline Murphy (1)	4
Ms. Imelda Martin (1)	5
Ms. Nollaig Byrne (1)	3
Ms. Nuala Ryan (1)	4
Ms. Liz Chaloner (1)	5
Mr. John Griffin (1)	5
Ms. Catherine Downey-Murphy (1)	5
Ms. Marie Dullea (1)	5
Ms. Loraine Mulligan (1)	5

(1) Term of appointment completed on 31 May 2013

Ms. Noelle Spring (2)	3
Mr. Noel Kelly (2)	3
Ms. Gary Joyce (2)	3
Mr. Gary O'Donnchadha (3)	1
Ms. Sylva Langford (2)	3
Mr. PJ Fitzpatrick (2)	2
Ms. Ita Mangan (2)	3
Mr. Rory O'Ferrall (2)	2

(2) Appointed 17 September 2013

(3) Appointed 02 December 2013

Note : Eight Board Meetings held in 2013

See Appendix 1 for dates of Board meetings in 2013 and for details of Board Sub-Groups



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 third Strategic Plan, which was developed in consultation with its stakeholders, sets out five Strategic Priorities for the Agency over the three years from 2010 to 2012. In 2013 the Family Support Agency continued to deliver on these priorities while also prioritising key tasks which had to be completed to facilitate the integration of the Agency into the new Child and Family Agency in January 2014.

4.3 Finance and Accounts

The Family Support Agency's Budget in 2013 was €23.599m. Of this figure, some €22.454m (95%) issued directly to voluntary and community organisations nationwide.

5. Work of the Agency in 2013

5.1 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.

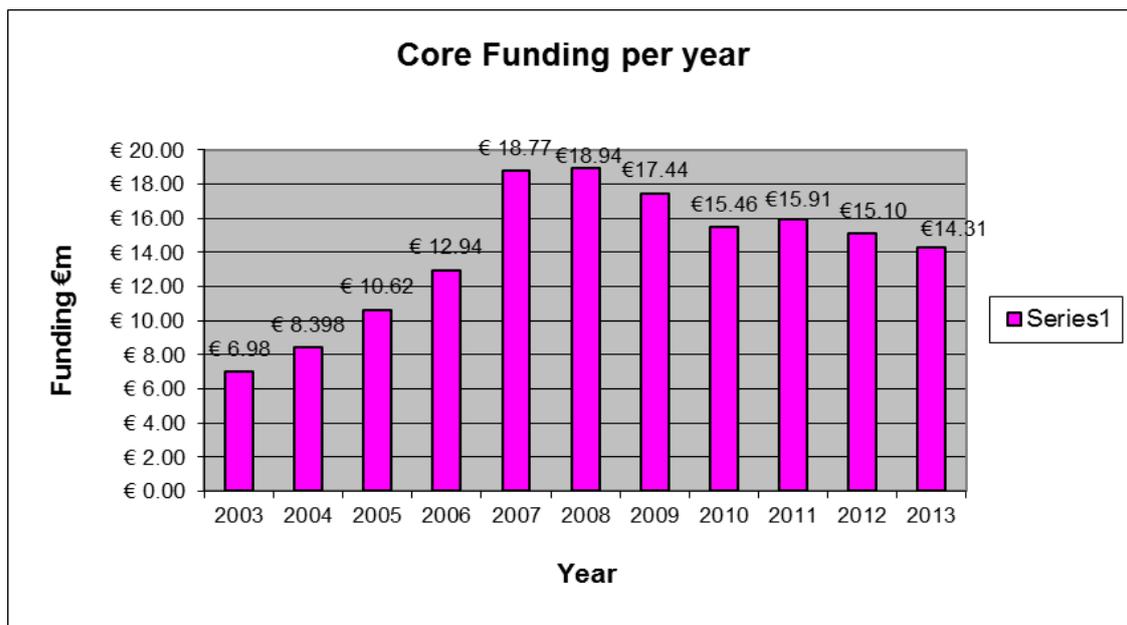
Policy Priorities

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 through the provision of community-based family support. 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.



Core Funded Centres and Funding

Since the Agency gained responsibility for the Programme in 2003, the number of core funded centres has increased from 63 to 106. The table below details funding for the Programme each year from 2003 to 2013:-



Services and Activities

The services provided and activities supported by the resource centres are designed to meet the needs of families and local communities. They provide Family Support in a way that reflects a strong community development ethos and the principle of inclusiveness, both central to the values of the Family Support Agency. The following is an indication of the range of services and initiatives undertaken:

FRCs provide a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities that address the needs of families. These can include:

- The provision of information, advice and support to target groups and families. Information concerning the range of services and development options available locally and advice on accessing rights and entitlements is also extended. FRCs act as a focal point for onward referrals to main stream service providers.
- Delivering education courses and training opportunities.



- The establishment and maintenance of new community groups to meet local needs and the delivery of services at local level (for example, childcare facilities, after-school clubs, men's groups, etc.)
- The provision of counselling and support to individuals and groups.
- Developing capacity and leadership within communities.
- Supporting personal and group development.
- Practical assistance to individuals and community groups such as access to information technology and office facilities.
- Supporting networking within the community.
- Contributing to Policy work.

Networking

The Agency encourages networking among Family Resource Centres at a regional and national level, primarily through the work of the support agencies and the Family Resource Centre National Forum. The Forum provides information and advice to FRCs and organises seminars on relevant issues. The Agency held quarterly meetings with the Family Resource Centre National Forum in 2013 and regular 'tripartite' meetings with the Forum and the two regional support agencies i.e. Framework and West Training and Development.

Data Collection and Evaluation

The Family Support Agency has a software-based data collection and self-evaluation system entitled SPEAK FRC (Strategic Planning, Evaluation and Knowledge System) available to each Family Resource Centre (FRC). A key feature of SPEAK FRC is that it can operate across multiple FRCs so that the data collected from each Project is then collated into a single database. The database is also used to inform the compilation of a programme level report outlining the outputs and impacts of FRCs' work that is published on an annual basis.

The primary benefit of SPEAK FRC is that staff and volunteers are encouraged to take time to consider the contribution that the FRC is making to their local community. It also provides the Family Support Agency with an overview of work within the Programme as well as outputs and impacts on the ground. SPEAK is a tool for self-evaluation. Its strengths lie in promoting critical thinking to inform positive changes to practice at all levels within FRCs.

The SPEAK system was further developed in 2013. Work progressed on the upgrade of the SPEAK system by Nexus Consulting. This was supported by a programme level working group. A key feature of the design of this version (FRC v3) is its focus on developing a Project and Programme level understanding of the contribution of FRCs to the five national programme outcomes. Engagement with SPEAK does not constitute an external evaluation.



Technical support and assistance on the SPEAK system, including regular bulletins, was provided to FRCs by West Training and Development, as part of its role in supporting the operation of the system.

Regional Support Agencies

West Training and Development has been contracted by the Family Support Agency to provide support and advice to FRCs in the west of the country and Framework operates in the eastern region. The two Regional Support Agencies provided technical support, advice and training to FRCs. They helped to promote best practice and set standards for the work of FRCs, including Board procedures, employment practice, company and accounting practices. They also worked with FRCs in drawing up their three year work plans; monitoring the performance of FRCs and providing the FSA with feedback on the progress of Centres. Also, training was delivered in a range of areas including community development, governance issues and employment legislation. The Regional Support Agencies also supported the monitoring of projects on behalf of the Family Support Agency.

Specialist Support Agencies

Five Specialist Support Agencies continued to support FRCs in their work in 2013 across a range of areas, including disability awareness and staff/volunteer training in personal advocacy for people with disabilities (DESSA), staff/volunteer training and awareness in terms of encouraging Traveller participation (Pavee Point), supporting families dealing with domestic violence and promoting the code of practice (Women's Aid), supporting family members dealing with drug use (Family Support Network), supporting and enabling FRCs to embed arts based community development in their work (Blue Drum).

Achievements in 2013

- €14.31m was paid to 106 Family Resource Centres under the Family and Community Services Resource Centre (FRC) Programme.
- The Strategic Framework for Family Support within the FRC Programme was revised in January 2013. The Framework is aligned to the National policy on families.
- A Family Support Training Programme for FRCs was developed through a tripartite process (Family Support Agency, FRC National Forum and National University of Ireland, Galway). The Programme will be rolled out in 2014.
- The SPEAK (Strategic, Planning, Evaluation, And Knowledge networking) Report relating to the work of the 106 Family Resource Centres in 2012 was launched.
- Plans were developed to gather Meitheal Statistics through the SPEAK system in 2014.



- Meetings with Child and Family Agency Area Managers commenced to facilitate information exchange with regard to services provided by FRCs and how best FRCs can support the work of the Child and Family Agency locally.
- In order to support and promote FRCs in local implementation of the Child and Family Agency's National Service Delivery Framework, LAP and Meitheal, reps from the FSA and FRC National Forum attended a number of Seminars and networking events.
- FRC frontline staff participated in Children First training with internal Child and Family Agency staff following discussions with, and the agreement of, the Regional Manager, HSE, Workforce Development.

5.2 Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services

2013 was the final year in which the Family Support Agency administered its Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations providing Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services. During 2013 a total amount of €8,147,000 was allocated for the Scheme of Grants.

Allocation of funding

A total of 618 organisations were approved for funding in 2013. This includes 28 major counselling organisations funded on a 3 year multi-annual basis.

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 2013 breakdown of the overall allocation of funding to the different services was:-

Grant Category	Funding Amount
Marriage Counselling	€4,478,690
Marriage Preparation	€ 534,660
Child Counselling	€1,132,900
Bereavement Counselling	€2,000,750



Multi-annual funding

A number of major counselling organisations (28) continued to receive funding on a multi-annual basis in 2013. These organisations are well established major counselling providers, in receipt of significant funding with an established track record. Multi-annual funding allows organisations to:

- plan within a given timeframe
- deliver a quality service
- add stability to the sector
- give stability to their staff

In 2013 the 28 major organisations were provided with funding amounting to €4,509,045.

Networking

Through the Association of Agency-based Counselling in Ireland (AACI), the Family Support Agency continued to promote and support networking among counselling organisations supported under the Grants Scheme in 2013. The AACI is a national network of significant counselling providers funded by the FSA. They have a key role in supporting the development of standards and good practice and for the roll-out of a data-base for grant recipients to enhance data collection and analysis. The AACI received a grant of €70,000 in 2013.

Achievements in 2013

- Funding provided to some 618 voluntary and community organisations providing counselling services, of which 28 received funding on a multi-annual basis
- Roll-out of new data-base for counselling groups to enhance data collection and analysis, in association with the Association of Agency-based Counselling in Ireland (AACI)
- Successful introduction of a new in-house Case Management System to administer all grant applications and prepare payment schedules to facilitate the issue of funding by the Finance Unit
- Visits by Counselling Staff to many Multi-Annual Funded bodies aimed at ensuring that organisations were “fit for purpose” in advance of the establishment of the new Child and Family Agency
- Agreement successfully concluded with Rainbows Ireland for that organisation to take on full responsibility for the administration and payment of all Rainbows Programme funding from 2014 onwards
- Plans developed, in association with the AACI, to expand their membership base in 2014 to include a further 40 of the larger counselling organisations currently receiving funding from the Agency



5.3 Research

IRCHSS Administered Projects – On Going Work

In 2010, the Family Support Agency entered into an agreement with the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (now the Irish Research Council), whereby the Council would administer funding for research projects on priority issues identified by the Agency. Three such studies were completed and launched in 2013 while two others are scheduled for completion in 2014. The projects in question are:

Family Relationships and Family Well-being: a study of the families of nine year-olds in Ireland. Final Report launched in January 2013

Family Well-being in Difficult Times: A Model of Factors Influencing the Well-being of Families on Limited Incomes in Ireland. Final report launched in July 2013

Growing Up in a One-Parent Family: Family structure, family well-being and child outcomes. Final Report launched in December 2013

Evaluation of Parental Social Welfare Status and their Children’s Psychosocial adjustment. Final report due for completion in 2014

Impact on Child Well-being and Family Strategies in household employment. Final report due for completion in 2014

In July 2012, The Board of the FSA approved a request to carry out an analysis of the social economic status of those who most often avail of the services of Family Resource Centres as well as an evaluation of the services that are considered to be of most benefit to those groupings. The report entitled **Changing Needs in Challenging Times** was published in January 2013



Appendix 1 - Board Meetings in 2013 and Board Sub-Groups

1. Board Meetings

28 January	25 February	25 March	29 April
27 May	20 September	8 November	13 December

2. Board Sub-Groups *

Sub-Group	Members
Audit and Corporate Governance	Dick Hickey, Marie Fenlon, Brian Duffy
Counselling	John Griffin, Dick Hickey, Caroline Murphy, Nuala Ryan
Family Resource Centres	Liz Chaloner, Marie Fenlon, Dick Hickey
Research	Marie Fenlon, Dick Hickey, Nuala Ryan, Imelda Martin
Strategy and Oireachtas Liaison	Sharon Foley, Nollaig Byrne, Catherine Downey-Murphy Caroline Murphy

* Sub-Groups in place up to 31 May 2013



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,

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

(v) 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

Bill O’Dea						Chief Executive					
1. Corporate Services				2. Research				3. Information			
Vacancy	AP			Brian O’Byrne	AP	Vacancy	AP				
Kay Keilthy	HEO			Vacancy	EO						
Anne O’Riordan	HEO			(Research & Information)							
Niamh Egan	EO										
Vacancy	CO										
4. Family Resource Centres and Counselling Grants											
Vacancy	AP										
Family Resource Centres and Counselling Grants											
Deirdre Fradl	HEO	Imelda Martin	EO	Siobhan Kennedy	CO						
Olive Shanley	HEO	Anne Butler	EO	Edel Gilchrist	CO						
Vacancy	HEO	Deirdre Roche	EO	Vacancy	CO						

Premises

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