Volunteerism Initiatives Advice
Leadership Equality Process LGBT Youth
Interculturalism Information Childcare Travellers
Family DrugUsers Training
Response Unemployed Environment
OlderPeople Support MentalHealth
Counselling Positive Participatory
Safety AdministrativeSupports Enterprise
Development DomesticViolence Approach
Community Progression
Housing PolicyWork Education
PhysicalHealthParentingAlone Residents Women Children
LackofAmenities Transport Resources Task
Supported Reflective Networks Tenants
Capacity Disabled Inclusion Groups Collective

The Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme

SPEAK FRC Report 2011

Family Support Agency

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

List of Figures

List of Tables

Foreword

In 1994, to mark the International Year of the Family, the Department of Social Welfare funded 10 Family Resource Centres (FRCs) on a 3 year pilot basis. This decision was motivated by the perception of a gap in statutory support for community development activities focused on support for families and tackling child poverty.

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

In line with these recommendations, the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme was established to provide local communities with the financial assistance required to staff and equip local Family Resource Centres. There are now 107 communities supported through the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. A Family Resource Centre is located in 106 of these.

Since May 2003 the Family Support Agency has had overall responsibility for management of the programme, including monitoring and support of centres, financial administration and executive decision making. During 2011 responsibility for the Family Support Agency transferred from the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Preparations are now underway for the integration of the Family Support Agency, and by extension the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme, into the new Child and Family Support Agency during 2013.

Figures 1 and 2 (in Appendix One) depict the distribution and catchment areas of Family Resource Centres across Ireland. A list of Family Resource Centres is provided in Appendix Two.

The Family Support Agency wishes to thank all FRCs for participating in the SPEAK FRC process during 2011. Thanks also to the membership of the SPEAK FRC Working Group for coordinating all SPEAK related work during 2011 and to West Training & Development Ltd. for compiling this report.

Executive Summary

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

The principal characteristics of this definition are central to the work of Family Resource Centres (FRCs). Each Family Resource Centre provides a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities at community level that address the needs of families categorised, for the most part, as level 1 or level 2 on the Hardiker Model (see page 6). These initiatives constitute an FRC's 'set of activities'. The 'style of work' employed by FRCs is characterised by a community development approach that seeks to development local capacity and leadership.

The work of each FRC is directed by a Voluntary Board of Directors. Work is implemented by a small core-funded staff (average 2.3 members). In most FRCs, this core-funded staff team is complimented by staff financed through additional funding programmes (average 5.5 staff). FRCs typically recruit volunteers to work alongside paid staff. During 2011, the average FRC coordinated a team of 28 volunteers contributing work hours equivalent to 4.06 full time staff.

Core funding granted by the Family Support Agency to the Family Resource Centres comprising the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme during 2011 amounted to just over €14.3 million. The average core funding allocated to an FRC was €133,861.

Outputs of FRC work during 2011 can be categorised as follows:

Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities

In seeking to deliver greater well-being for families, FRCs adopt a community development approach to family support. This approach is characterised by a participative style that seeks to empower local communities.

- In 2011, an average of 10.6 people served as Voluntary Directors within each FRC. Each Voluntary Board contributed more than 454 voluntary hours fulfilling its duties. This equates to a contribution of 43 hours per Voluntary Director.

- As in 2010, the target groups most likely to be represented on Voluntary Boards of Directors during 2011 were Women, Older People and Unemployed people. Those target groups least likely to be represented on Voluntary Boards of Directors were Drug Users, members of LGBT communities and Travellers.

- The most significant increase in relation to target group representation on Voluntary Boards of Directors involved Unemployed people.

Establishing and Coordinating a Community Response to Local Needs

FRCs seek to facilitate local individuals and families to identify their own needs and to work collectively to respond to these needs.

- During 2011, 305 new community groups and initiatives were formed with the involvement of FRCs. Over 3,300 people participated in these responses. The total number of community responses now recorded in the SPEAK database is 1,704. These have a combined participation rate of 31,698 people.

- Youth groups are the most frequent form of community response established by FRCs. FRCs have now contributed to the establishment of 182 youth groups.

- The number of mental health groups established during 2011 (15) matches the total number of mental health groups established by FRCs during the period 2005 to 2010.

- FRCs have now established 41 childcare initiatives catering for 1,655 children.

- Twenty two new community responses focusing on unemployment were established during 2011. There are now over 500 people participating in these groups and initiatives. A further 69 people are participating in enterprise initiatives.

- There are now over 1,500 people involved in community saving schemes established with the involvement of an FRC.

- 2011 is the first year that FRCs established more men's groups than women's groups. However, there are still considerably more women's groups than men's groups (91 and 72 respectively) recorded in the database.

- During 2011, FRCs were 'solely' or 'mainly' responsible for 76% of all new community responses entered into the database.

Supporting Community Groups and Initiatives that were established Independently of FRCs

FRCs contribute to the self-reliance and autonomy of community groups and initiatives that were established independently of them. While these groups and initiatives seek to address challenges faced by local families, FRCs played no role in their establishment.

- During 2011, over 1,400 community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs were supported by their local FRC. Principally, support was requested in relation to accessing funding (649 groups), organisational development (397 groups) and addressing specific policy issues (359 groups).

- The average FRC received 1.45 visits each working day from community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs seeking to access administrative supports.

- The average FRC made meeting rooms available an average of .8 times each working day to community groups and initiatives that were established

independently of FRCs (including Citizens Information Service and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service).

Providing Education and Training Opportunities

FRCs administer a range of education and training opportunities within local communities for individuals and families.

- During 2011, FRCs have been responsible, often in conjunction with other service providers, for significant outputs in relation to training and education:

    o 17,870 people completed education courses
    o 11,610 people completed training courses
    o 7,722 people completed self development courses.

- These figures represent a considerable increase on corresponding figures for 2010.

- Those target groups most likely to participate in courses delivered through FRCs are Women and Unemployed people.

- Courses administered through an FRC during 2011 were most likely to focus on health, communications / IT and parenting.

Providing Information and Advice

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

- In total, FRC staff and volunteers directly provided 157,405 people with information or advice during 2011. This represents a marked increase on the 2010 figure of 136,675 people.

- A further 65,675 people were referred onward to other organisations or services. Again, this represents a notable increase on the figure recorded during 2010.

- Referrals made by FRCs during 2011 were most likely to be made to the Vocational Education Committees, the Citizens Information Service or the Money Advice and Budgeting Service.

Hosting Counselling Services

FRCs offer access to affordable professional counselling services within local communities. FRCs also work to create an environment wherein individuals and families feel welcome to access informal, non-judgemental, support on a one-to-one level.

- Over 17,000 professional counselling sessions were delivered during the year. This figure breaks down into:
  - 7,239 sessions concerning 'Relationship'
  - 4,036 sessions concerning 'Bereavement'
  - 2,657 sessions concerning 'Separation'
  - 3,440 sessions concerning 'other' topics.

- In total, the number of counselling sessions delivered was lower than in 2010. However, the number of bereavement counselling sessions increased.

- Alongside those who accessed professional counselling services through an FRC, a further 15,069 people benefited from informal one-to-one support.

Contributing to Policy Work

FRCs seek to contribute to the coordination and delivery of community-based services and to make the benefit of their learning and experience available to those involved in decision making process relating to family support and community development.

- During 2011, FRCs attended approximately 1,000 conferences. This represents a decrease of 27% on the corresponding figure for 2010.

- On average, FRCs located in Dublin attended over twice as many conferences as did FRCs located outside of Dublin.

Section 1   Providing a Community Development Approach to Family Support: An Introduction to the Family and Community Services Resource Centre programme

> 'An important aspect of this policy document…is the emphasis placed on the role of families and communities in the lives of our children…The inclusion of families, extended families and local communities, where possible, in services for children goes a long way to ensuring that these services are actually responding to the needs of the child and ensures that they continue to be effective in the long term, even when direct intervention from State or voluntary agencies has ceased.'
>
> (*The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* 2007, p. v)

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

Central to this definition is the recognition of family support as encompassing both 'task' (a set of activities) and 'process' (a style of work) with an emphasis on early intervention and the need to attend specifically to those who are vulnerable or at risk. The critical importance of working with children and families within the context of their homes and communities is also acknowledged.

The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme ensures these fundamental characteristics of family support work are central to the work of Family Resource Centres (FRCs) through the adoption of a community development approach. Community development is 'a developmental activity composed of both a task and a process. The task is the achievement of social change linked to equality and social justice, and the process is the application of the principles of participation,

empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and coordinated way' (Pobal 1999 cited in Pobal 2011, p13).

A community development approach to family support ensures that the work of FRCs is undertaken in partnership with families, communities and all relevant stakeholders. The organisational structure of FRCs requires service-users to be centrally involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of all services and initiatives. Each FRC is governed by Voluntary Board of Directors comprised primarily of intended beneficiaries of the project.

FRCs are located within local communities, are managed by local community members and rely heavily on local voluntary input. Being regarded as 'of the community, for the community and by the community' enables FRCs deliver developmental opportunities and services that are tailored to meet local needs and conditions in an environment that is welcoming and non-stigmatised. Their unique position allows for the provision of opportunities and services that are open to all of the community while ensuring that those individuals and families that stand to benefit most from participation receive the personal supports required to do so.

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

The value of adopting a focus on prevention and early intervention is also recognised in the *Statement of Strategy 2011-2014* of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs that states 'while many resources are currently and necessarily deployed to secure moderate remedial outcomes (often too late in a child's life), significant

research evidence indicates that in many cases targeted earlier interventions would result in much improved outcomes' (2012, p. 4).

In its *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011), the Family Support Agency adopted seven programme outcomes for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. These are that children and their families be:

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

These programme outcomes mirror the seven National Service Outcomes for children in Ireland as presented in the *Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* (2007, p.12).

Reference is made to how these seven outcomes are being achieved in each section of this report.

What do Family Resource Centres do?

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

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

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

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

- Practical assistance to individuals, families and community groups such as access to information technology, office equipment and administrative supports
- Provision of information and advice at local level
- Provision of counselling and support to individuals and families
- Delivery of education courses and training opportunities
- Practical assistance to existing community groups such as help with organisational structures, assistance to access funding or advice on how to address specific social issues

- The establishment and maintenance of new community groups to meet local needs and to deliver services at local level
- The direct provision of local family support services (for example, childcare facilities, after-school clubs, homework clubs, etc.)
- The direct provision of broader community services and development initiatives (for example, jobs clubs, women's groups, residents associations, etc.)
- The support of personal and group development through the use of community arts
- Bridging the gap between service providers and local communities
- Building partnerships between other voluntary and statutory agencies operating in each locality.

Two Regional Support Agencies provide a range of training and support opportunities to FRC Volunteer Directors and staff. These can be grouped into two broad categories.

Firstly, Regional Support Agencies provide training and support relating to the development and maintenance of the required skills base for the effective management of FRCs. Specifically, in relation to:
- Legal and financial governance
- Budgeting and accounting
- Recruitment and employment issues
- Planning and evaluation
- Internal communication.

Secondly, Regional Support Agencies provide on-going training and support relating to the provision of a community development approach to family support.

As well as Regional Support Agencies, FRCs can access training and support from an array of contracted organisations relating to specific work approaches. These are Blue Drum (Arts Specialist Support Agency); DESSA (Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency); Pavee Point Traveller Centre; Women's Aid; Family Support Network.

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

Figure 3: Levels of Need, Hardiker Model

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 2   Methodology

This report presents data inputted by 101 Family Resource Centres into the SPEAK FRC v2.75 National Programme Database 2011. This data is supplemented by more detailed information relating to the work of four FRCs that participated in a series of facilitated self evaluation workshops using an augmented version of the SPEAK system (SPEAK FRC 3).

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

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

The SPEAK FRC v2.75 software interface has four sections. Each is designed to mimic one of the areas in Figure 4 to create a cyclical evaluation process. The first part of the cycle requires FRCs to compile an overview of the community within which they are working. Attention is then focused on the resources available to the FRC during the evaluation period. Users record the immediate outputs of their work toward the end of the evaluation cycle. The cycle is completed by prompting FRCs to examine the impact of their work on the local community. In this way, the process becomes an ongoing cycle wherein changes and developments are recorded and compared.

During 2011, FRCs were not required to complete tasks associated with the first section of the cycle (Operational Environment) or the last section of the cycle (Impacts). Notwithstanding this, 65 of the 101 FRCs chose to complete each of the four sections of the cycle in order to inform reflective practice at project level. Figure 4 illustrates the four distinct sections to the SPEAK FRC v2.75 self evaluation cycle.

Figure 4: SPEAK FRC v2.75 cycle, Order and Purpose of Tasks
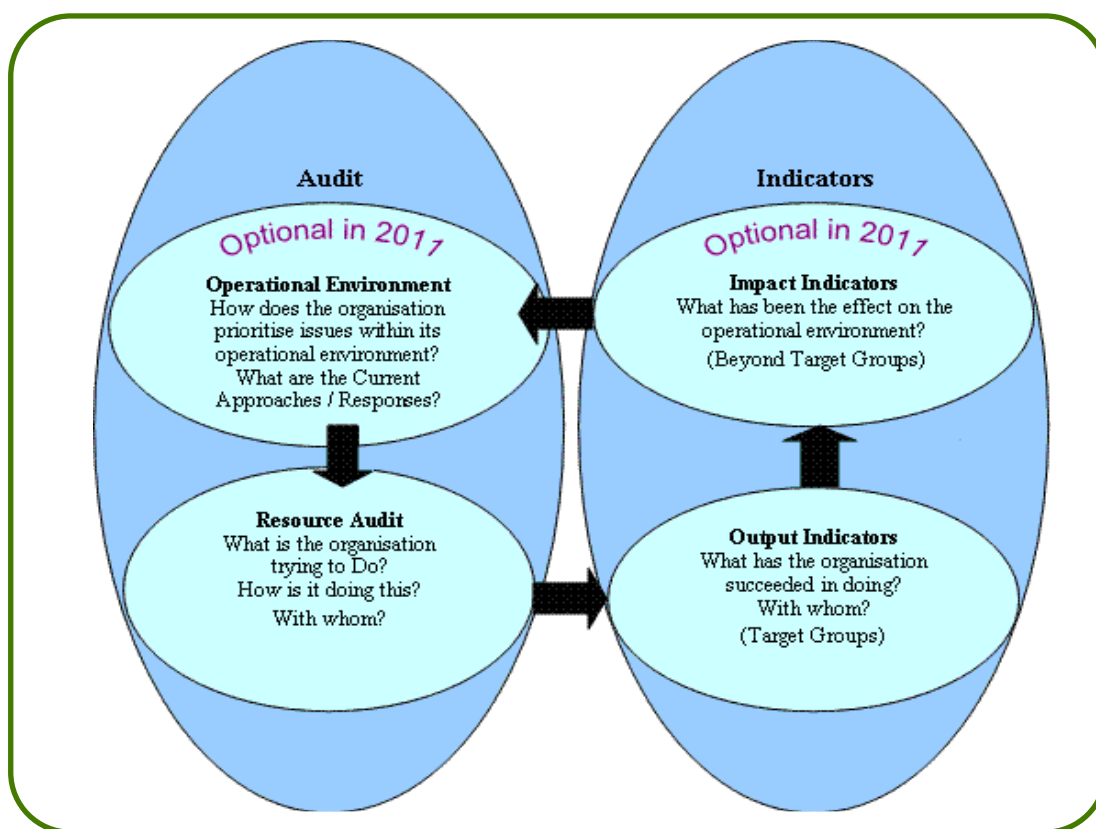
Operational Environment (n=65)

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

Resource Audit (n=101)

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

- The amount of time spent on each working technique and approach employed by the organisation's staff and volunteer team. The nine working techniques categorised within the resource audit section are: Project Maintenance and Project Development; Establishing Community Groups, Networks and Initiatives; Establishing Community Arts Initiatives; Helping Existing Community Groups; Providing Education and Training Opportunities;

Providing Information and Advice; Hosting Counselling Services; Providing Front-of-House Administrative Supports; Contributing to Policy Work.

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

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

Outputs (n=101)

This section collects data relating to the direct outputs of the FRC's work under nine categories relating to the nine working methods employed by FRCs (providing front-of-house administrative supports; providing information and advice; providing education and training; establishing new groups, networks and initiatives; establishing community arts initiatives; helping existing groups; providing counselling; networking locally; policy work). Much of this information is quantitative in nature. This data is collected at an organisational level where inputs are agreed and entered during a facilitated staff meeting following the completion of all individual Resource Audits.

Impact Indicators (n=65)

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

The data collected relating to sections two (Resource Audit) and three (Outputs) of the cycle for the calendar year 2011 was submitted to the Family Support Agency by the end of March 2012. Each dataset returned was then subjected to an initial inspection to identify potentially erroneous data entries. Datasets identified as atypical or unexpected were noted and then queried with the relevant FRC. In each case,

judgement regarding the accuracy of the data was made by the FRC coordinator. All amendments to the data were made at FRC level. A second data inspection was undertaken following the same process. All datasets were compiled into a Programme Database in April 2012.

Complimentary SPEAK FRC 3 data

As mentioned, data taken from the National Programme Database 2011 relating to the outputs of 101 FRCs using SPEAK FRC v2.75 is complimented throughout this report by more detailed data relating to the work of 4 FRCs. These FRCs are:

- Tacú FRC, Ballinrobe
- St. Andrews FRC, Dublin
- Mountview FRC, Dublin
- Drop In Well FRC, Dublin

These FRCs were chosen by way of convenience sampling to participate in facilitated self-evaluation workshops using an augmented version of the SPEAK system, SPEAK FRC 3. These workshops were used to test the suitability of SPEAK FRC 3 for roll-out within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre programme. Data relating to a fifth FRC that took part in this process, Killaloe / Ballina FRC, is not considered in this report.

FRCs using SPEAK 3 took part in three data entry workshops facilitated by NEXUS Research with the Regional Support Agencies in attendance. Data was also inputted between workshops, via the internet, by relevant FRC staff and volunteers. Participating FRCs also contributed to a review session facilitated by the Regional Support Agencies.

Data gathered through the SPEAK FRC 3 system (n=4) is treated as distinct from the data provided through the SPEAK FRC v2.75 system (n=101). The more detailed SPEAK FRC 3 data is distinguished throughout the report through the use of this icon.

Where necessary, further notes on the methodology follow.

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

Section 3   FRC Resources: Funding, Staff and Volunteers

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

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

Note on Methodology

Data relating to available resources is collected in the Operational Environment section of the SPEAK FRC v2.75 system. Engagement with this section was optional for FRCs during 2011. Nonetheless, 65 out of the 101 completed the section. Therefore, averages presented below are based on data recorded by 65 of the 101 participating FRCs.

FRC Funding

Core funding granted by the Family Support Agency to the 106 FRCs that contributed to the national programme database in 2011 amounted to €14,323,181 (Family Support Agency, 2012). This equates to an average core funding allocation of €133,861.50 per FRC. However, many FRCs received less than €100,000.

FRC Human Resources (n = 65)

During 2011, the average FRC benefited from the following resources:

- 10.6 Volunteer Directors contributing a combined 454.7 hours (see Section 4)
- 2.3 Core Funded Staff (full time equivalent)
- 5.5 staff funded though other programmes (full time equivalent)
- 28 Volunteers contributing the same amount of time as 4.06 full time staff.

Section 4   Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities

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

> As participative and empowering organisations, FRCs build the capacity and leadership abilities of local individuals, families and communities. This element of FRC work primarily contributes to the programme outcomes for children and families:
>
> - Being part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
> - Being included and participating in society.

Note on Methodology

Data relating to the development of capacity and community leadership within FRC catchment areas concerns the process through which FRCs identify potential community leaders, provide the required training and supports to enable full participation as Directors of an FRC and practice planning, evaluation and review skills.

This data is collected in the Operational Environment section and the Impact Indicators section of the SPEAK FRC v2.75 system. Engagement with these sections was optional for FRCs. Nonetheless, 65 out of the 101 FRCs chose to input data relating to the development of capacity and leadership within local communities.

When asked to identify target groups represented on their Voluntary Boards of Directors, SPEAK FRC users were advised to identify members that 'come from, represent or have an expertise in relation to the target group…however, do not identify members simply because they happen to be young, old, etc., only identify members that bring relevant life experience or expertise to the Board.' (Nexus Research Coop 2010, n.p.).

Outputs in relation to Developing Capacity and Leadership within Communities

During 2011, the average FRC Voluntary Board of Directors comprised 10.6 people. On average, each Voluntary Board of Directors contributed 454.7 voluntary hours fulfilling its duties. This equates to a voluntary contribution of just under 43 hours per Volunteer Director over the course of the year.

The average number of people undertaking voluntary directorships within FRCs during 2011 was slightly higher than the corresponding figure for 2010 (10.3 people). Through their participation, Volunteer Directors gain invaluable experience as company directors, as employers and as development strategists. They develop and practice skills relating to planning and review, organisational development and staff support and supervision. Volunteer Directors fulfil their duties in line with company law and in compliance with corporate governance requirements.

It is central to the community development approach adopted by FRCs that members of targeted sub-groups within local communities – those most likely to benefit from the work of an FRC – are active at all levels of decision making within each FRC; this is especially true of FRC Voluntary Boards of Directors where strategic decisions are taken relating to the focus of an FRC's work. A description of sub-groups targeted by the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme is provided in Appendix Four. Figure 5 illustrates the extent of target group representation on Voluntary Boards of Directors during 2011.

Figure 5: Representation of Target Groups on FRC Voluntary Boards of Directors, 2011 (n = 65)
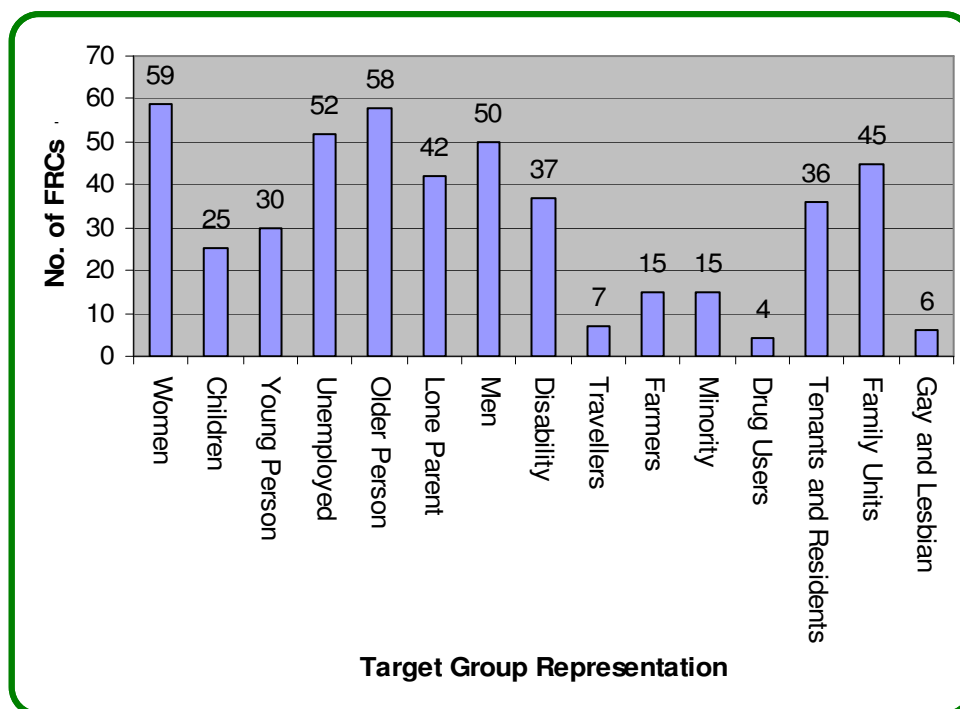
Women, Older People and the Unemployed were the most frequently represented target groups on FRCs' Voluntary Boards of Directors. Of the 65 FRCs that completed this section, 59 had representation from Women on their Voluntary Boards of Directors.

Drug Users, LGBT and Travellers were the least likely target groups to be represented. This is consistent with corresponding SPEAK FRC data for 2008, 2009 and 2010. When considering target group representation on Voluntary Boards of Directors, many FRCs noted that target groups are not always present within a project's catchment area. For example, farmers are not likely to be found in urban areas. Stigma associated with membership of other target groups may hinder the efforts of FRCs to achieve representation at Board level; for example, Drug Users or members of the LGBT communities.

While very little change has taken place in the composition of Voluntary Boards of Directors since 2006, representation of Unemployed people has increased notably during 2011. In 2010, 75% of Voluntary Boards included representation from unemployed people; in 2011, this figure rose to 80%.

The weight of responsibility associated with fulfilling the role of Volunteer Director is highlighted by many SPEAK FRC users. Meeting legal requirements associated with being an employer was noted as being particularly challenging by many Voluntary Boards:

> 'The staff of the Centre has grown over the last year with 5 new people coming on board during 2011. In addition, Clann FRC is the host project for the Western Regional Suicide Prevention Worker who started work on a Suicide Prevention Strategy for the Western Region. Managing all this takes time.' **Clann Resource Centre**

> '[Hourly contribution of Volunteer Directors has increased during 2011 as] the Board of Management has been heavily involved in a legal case relating to employment law.' **An FRC located in Dublin**

In turn, the need to support Volunteer Directors to fulfil these duties places additional demands on FRC staff:

> 'The Resource Centre has recruited 5 new members to the Voluntary Board of Directors in 2011. This has meant more [of the project coordinator's] time is given to ensuring the new directors have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as directors and employers.' **Castlemaine Family Resource Centre**

> 'As Community Development Worker, my role involves having close contact with individuals, and encouraging members of target groups to represent their target group on the Voluntary Board of Directors, this involves providing support and guidance to ensure the individual feels comfortable in the role.' **Raphoe FRC**

Notwithstanding the considerable commitment required, the benefit to local communities arising out of the personal development and the skills training undertaken by Volunteer Directors, and sub-committees of the Board, is apparent from the following comments:

'Greater support for [Volunteer Directors] through training and capacity building strengthens the voluntary input into all programmes, activities and events in the area.' **St. Johnston and Carrigans FRC**

'One of the main aims of the FRC was to build the capacity of [the Cove youth committee] and all its members…By organising events for other young people and fundraising activities, the young people were able to develop organisational skills…The group recognised that these skills will be useful to them as they move into further education and employment…[Some] had never been part of a committee before and felt that this experience would be really useful to them when organising committees for future voluntary projects. They also felt that the whole experience…made them more likely to engage in voluntary activity in the future.' **Westport FRC**

Fulfilling the duties of a Volunteer Director is regarded as a milestone in the personal progression of some target group members:

'Staff inform members of the local community of particular development groups or initiatives which may be beneficial to them…[through accessing these opportunities] individuals gain confidence and may become volunteers within the FRC and progress to Board Membership'. **Gort FRC**

'Many people have regained their confidence…many vulnerable people have benefited from learning new skills through their involvement with the Centre.' **Killinarden FRC**

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.

The Voluntary Boards of Management of these four FRCs comprised 35 people. However, during 2011, these FRCs coordinated the work of 390 volunteers and provided training to 320 of these.

That so few of the volunteers involved with FRCs opt to fulfil directorships within FRCs may be a further indication of the weight of responsibility associated with this role.

Section 5   Developing and Coordinating a Community Response to Local Needs

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

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

Individual community groups and initiatives, depending on the nature of their work, contribute to specific family support programme outcomes as adopted in the Strategic Framework for *Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011). Table 1 (page 22) presents a categorisation of community responses under each of the seven programme outcomes for family support.

While FRCs contributed to the establishment of each of the community responses addressed in this section, many were established in partnership with other organisations. Figure 6, details the extent of FRC involvement in the establishment of each.

Note on Methodology

The data presented in this section relates to the number and nature of community groups established by FRCs. Data is also collected relating to the variety of services developed and delivered by FRCs. Information concerning once-off initiatives such as community festivals and parades is also presented here. The quantitative data

20

informing this section is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Data relating to the identified impacts of this work is entered in a facilitated meeting of Volunteer Directors.

As the work of many community groups or initiatives is long-term in its nature, the system enables users to enter data relating to the same community groups and initiatives year-upon-year. This results in detailed accounts of this work being constructed over time.

Many community responses are formed to address multiple needs (for individuals, families and communities). For this reason, categorising community responses with reference to individual national services outcomes can be difficult. To inform the categorisation presented in this section, a survey was conducted of the 2,212 qualitative descriptions entered into SPEAK; one relating to each of the community groups and initiatives recorded within the system. While some appear relevant to more than one national service outcome, the categorisation presented in this section lists each under a single national service outcome only; that to which the group or initiative seems most relevant.

No reason was provided for the formation of 247 community groups or initiatives (these were identified by a name only). 203 were described as fund-raising or planning / coordinating initiatives. In the case of 18, no obvious link to a national service outcome could be found. (These 18 included 1 Network of Professional Reflexologists, 2 Catering Services, 11 unspecified Outreach initiatives, 3 Pilgrimage Groups and 1 Dog Training initiative.) Consequently, these 468 groups and initiatives are excluded from further analysis. Forty Community groups or initiatives were concluded during 2011.

Therefore, data relating to a total of 1,704 community groups or initiatives is considered in this section. Of these, 305 were established during 2011.

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

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

During 2011, FRCs contributed to the establishment of 305 new community groups or initiatives bringing the total number of active community responses that were established, or part established, by FRCs to 1,704.

This rate of establishment of community responses is in broad correspondence with the 321 and the 274 established during 2010 and 2009 respectively.

Table 1: Community Responses categorised by National Programme Outcome

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers participating
Healthy, both physically and mentally	50	687	221	3118
Supported in active learning	26	542	168	4463
Safe from accidental and intentional harm	9	107	53	666
Economically secure	27	249	65	2146
Secure in the immediate and wider physical environment	20	217	98	2863
Part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community	112	819	752	10298
Included and participating in society	61	696	347	8144
Total	**305**	**3,317**	**1,704**	**31,698**

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrates that while the community responses contribute to each of the programme's family support outcomes, as in previous years a particularly strong emphasis is placed on the two final programme outcomes: building 'positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community' and promoting 'inclusion and participation within society'.

A detailed categorisation of each of the 1,704 community responses follows. Tables 2 to 8 arrange community groups and initiatives recorded in the database under headings which are, in turn, catalogued under each of the programme objectives set out in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011).

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the 221 community responses contributing to the achievement of **more healthy families, in terms of both physical and mental health.** The most frequent type of response listed here relates to support groups for parents (68 instances). This was also the most popular response relating to this national programme outcome that was established during 2011 (18 instances).

The significant number of mental health groups established during 2011 is notable (15 instances). This equals the total number of mental health groups established by FRCs between the years 2005 and 2010. Two FRCs cited the devastating impact on local communities of recent suicides as a factor that motivated the establishment of these responses. A further three local suicide prevention initiatives were established during 2011. Local suicides were also mentioned as the impetus behind the established of two of these.

No new personal development programmes, 'meals on wheels' services or meditation / spiritual groups were established during 2011. However, numbers participating in existing groups have remained steady.

Table 2: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome *Healthy, both Physically and Mentally*

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers partic'ing
Parents Support Groups (incl. Marriage Preparation courses and Triple P Prog.)	18	92	68	899
Physical health (incl. delivery of medical services, health related support groups and Lifestyle Challenge progs.)	6	179	49	685
Drugs (includes support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous)	3	7	20	155
Bereavement (includes Rainbows Groups and other bereavement support groups)	3	22	20	552
Mental Health Groups (incl. advocacy groups as well as support groups)	15	250	30	361
Personal Development programmes			9	43
Meals on Wheels services			8	62
Separated Couples / Parents (includes Family Conferencing and Supervised Access to Children)	2	45	9	49
Suicide Prevention	3	92	6	178
Meditation / Spiritual			2	134
Total	**50**	**687**	**221**	**3,118**

Table 3 demonstrates the contribution FRCs are making toward the creation of an environment wherein **people are supported in active learning.** There are now 41 childcare initiatives supported by FRCs. These cater for 1,655 children.

Out-of-school initiatives, such as summer camps and 'transition programmes' for pupils moving from primary to secondary level education, were the most common type of response established during 2011. Alongside afterschools clubs, homework clubs and study clubs, these demonstrate the role FRCs are playing in providing a programme of supervised learning-centred activities to children outside of school hours. Eight out-of-school initiatives concluded during 2011. Each of these was described in the database as a summer camp and the reason provided for terminating the initiative was that the new school term had commenced.

Table 3: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome *Supported in Active Learning*

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers participating
Childcare Providers	7	58	41	1655
Afterschools Clubs	1	not inputted	32	470
IT Learning Support Groups			18	476
Out of Schools Initiatives (incl. Summer Camps and Transition Prog.)	10	429	21	1166
Literacy Programme	5	not inputted	19	74
Homework Clubs	1	30	12	294
Study Clubs			9	38
Preschools	1	10	10	146
Playschools			2	58
Breakfast Clubs	1	15	3	41
Lunch Clubs			1	45
Total	**26**	**542**	**168**	**4,463**

Unfortunately, no data was provided relating to the number participating on the newly established afterschools club or literacy programmes (5).

Carers support groups are the response most frequently established by FRCs in order to advance **safety from accidental or intentional harm.** With five new instances established during 2011, the total number of carers support groups in the database is now 26. Although there are fewer instances of community responses relating to domestic violence, these responses tend to have a higher rate of participation. Over 320 people are involved in the 8 existing community responses to domestic violence.

No data was inputted relating to the numbers participating on the newly established garda information service.

Table 4: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome *Safe from Accidental and Intentional Harm*

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers participating
Carers' Support Group	5	41	26	185
Domestic Violence (includes advocacy groups and support groups)	1	30	8	323
Neighbourhood Watch Initiatives			7	35
Strengthening Families Programme	2	36	7	54
Peace / Cross Border Initiatives			2	40
Elder Abuse Advocacy Groups			1	25
Garda Information Service	1	not inputted	2	4
Total	**9**	**107**	**53**	**666**

More than half of the entire number of community responses to unemployment recorded in the database were established during 2011. Of the 27 community groups or initiatives established during 2011 with the aim of **providing economic security**, 22 were targeted at unemployed people. These responses include support groups, jobs clubs and 'back to work' courses. Almost 500 unemployed people are now availing of these development opportunities. A further 69 participants are involved in initiatives seeking to promote enterprise. The impact of the economic recession on families, and men in particular, was encapsulated by one FRC:

'Over the past year many men have come to the centre feeling distressed and socially isolated. Most of them in their late forties, early fifties; unemployed and feeling they will never work again. Their confidence and self-esteem shattered. Now they have become high risk as regards suicide and developing alcohol problems.' **Solas FRC, Headford**

Table 5: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome *Economically Secure*

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers participating
Unemployed Groups (incl. support groups, career development, Jobs Clubs and activation initiatives)	22	234	42	497
Enterprise Groups	2	6	12	69
Savings Banks	2	9	6	1535
St. Vincent de Paul Chapters	1	not inputted	3	5
Fundraising Groups (excl. fundraising for FRC activities)			1	40
Non-Migrant Workers Support Group			1	not inputted
Total	**27**	**249**	**65**	**2,146**

Two new savings banks were established in 2011. There are over 1,500 people involved with 6 different savings banks recorded in the database.

2011 saw 6 new housing / residents / estate management groups formed with the contribution of FRCs. This brings the total number of such responses to 53 (Table 6). While these groups primarily focus on maintenance of public spaces, local enhancement projects and acting as liaison with local County Councils or regeneration boards, two of the newly established initiatives cite the need to respond to anti-social behaviour as their motivation:

> 'This estate required support from the FRC to become involved in a neighbourhood watch programme.' **Knockmay FRC**

> '[This group was established] to support residents in fear of the anti-social behaviour in their community.' **Dunmanway FRC**

Table 6: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome *Secure in the Immediate and Wider Physical Environment*

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers participating
Housing / Residents / Estate Management (incl. Regeneration Groups)	6	48	53	2345
Community Facilities (incl. Playgrounds)	4	21	15	225
Campaigning Groups (with emphasis on local issues / needs)	1	40	13	65
Environmental Groups (with emphasis on local environment)	6	108	11	191
Community Mediation Groups	1	not inputted	3	12
Community Care Group	2	not inputted	3	25
Total	**20**	**217**	**98**	**2,863**

Table 7: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome *Part of Positive Networks of Family, Friends, Neighbours and the Community*

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Part'ting	Number of Instances	Numbers part'ing
Youth Groups (includes Youth Cafés and No Name Clubs)	22	223	182	2774
Older People's Groups (incl. social groups)	14	117	115	1304
Women's Groups	13	64	91	850
Parent and Toddlers' Groups	9	105	71	2439
Intercultural Groups (support groups and advocacy groups)	5	10	53	671
Men's Groups (support groups, Men's Sheds, social groups)	26	113	72	500
Disability Groups (support and advocacy & support for families)	5	28	34	322
Lone Parents' Groups (incl. support groups, social groups)	2	14	30	86
Intergenerational Groups			22	241
Children's Groups (including scouts, children's discos, etc.)			14	275
Other Family Support Groups (incl. family respite centre, supports where members are in addiction recovery)	4	15	18	402
Mothers' Groups (includes Incredible Years Programme)	6	97	18	112
Travellers' Groups (Social and advocacy)	2	12	13	94
LGBT Groups (includes support and advocacy groups for LGBT and groups for families)	4	21	10	118
Fathers' Groups (incl. support groups and father and son groups)			6	90
Native Irish Speakers Groups			3	20
Total	**112**	**819**	**752**	**10,298**

Table 7 presents the range of community responses recorded in the database that seek to promote **positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community**. With over 10,000 participants, these are the community responses that attract the most widespread involvement.

During 2011, men's groups were the most commonly established community response relating to this programme outcome. There are still considerably fewer men's groups than women's groups in the database (72 and 91 respectively); however, 2011 was the first year that more men's groups than women's groups were established (26 to 13 respectively). The number of newly established men's groups may be partly due to the widespread adoption of the men's shed as a model of engaging with men. During 2011, men's sheds were established in 11 FRCs.

The range of initiatives presented in Table 7 illustrates that when establishing positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and communities, FRCs' focus is spread across all stages of the life course. Fourteen new community responses for Older People were established during the year. With 182 instances, youth groups are the most frequent of all the community responses established by FRCs. In total, 2,774 young people participate in these groups. Nine new instances bring the number of active parent and toddler groups to 71. Over 2,400 people are now participating in these groups.

Community responses directed at the needs of a number of other specific target groups are also included in Table 7. New groups and initiatives for Travellers (2), Lone Parents (2), LGBT communities (4) and People with Disabilities (5) were established during 2011. Five new intercultural groups were also established.

The range of community responses associated with the national programme outcome of **building a more inclusive and participative society** are presented in Table 8. The most frequent type of community response related to this programme outcome involves community arts. There are 181 different community arts initiatives identified as active in the database. The value of community arts as a method of encouraging participation is reflected in the high participation rates associated with these responses. Over 3,000 people participated in community arts initiatives established by FRCs during 2011.

Many FRCs indicated that community arts initiatives are an effective means of highlighting relevant social issues and of engaging with specific groups that may be reluctant to participate in a support or advocacy group:

> '[The 'latitude project' is a] cultural project using the arts to promote sea safety and life jacket awareness.' **Moville and District Family Resource Centre**

> 'For 16 weeks two groups worked on quilts on the theme of mental health. The quilts and other crafts work was launched as part of our mental health awareness event.' **Croom FRC**

> [The FRC] encourages local people living alone or coping with a mental illness or disability to become socially active through our weekly art programme in the Parish Hall.' **St Canice's Community Action**

Local sports initiatives established by FRCs also enjoy very high rates of participation with almost 1,700 people participating in the 42 active instances. As with community arts initiatives, sporting groups were seen by many FRCs as a means of tackling a broad range of social issues:

> 'The goal [of establishing a football club] was to deal with the issues of anti-social behaviour in the community. As a result of this initiative the incidences of anti-social behaviour have decreased dramatically.' **Rosemount FRC**

> '[The Walk and Talk group] aims to promote and encourage walking as a part of a healthy lifestyle. It also seeks to address issues of social exclusion and loneliness in a rural community.' **St. Johnston and Carrigans FRC**

Table 8: Community Responses linked to the National Programme Outcome _Included and Participating in Society_

Concern of Group / Initiative	Groups / Initiatives established in 2011		All active Groups / Initiatives (irrespective of year established)	
	Number of Instances	Numbers Participating	Number of Instances	Numbers participating
Arts Groups	38	322	181	3036
Groups for People 'New to Community' (welcoming initiatives and social groups)			39	1591
Sports Groups (incl. Community Games, Sports Clubs and Informal Sporting Events)	11	150	42	1695
Community Gardens	6	59	31	496
Isolated Rural Dwellers (incl. Care and Repair Groups and Rural Transport initiatives)	4	55	24	594
Heritage Groups (incl. Local History Groups)			14	160
Active Citizenship Groups (incl. community development courses)	1	110	10	422
Community Consultation / Research Groups			3	60
Family Fun Days	1	not inputted	3	90
Total	**61**	**696**	**347**	**8,144**

Combined, the community groups and initiatives identified as active in the database recorded accessing €2,625,549 during 2011. This figure closely mirrors the corresponding 2010 figure of €2,475, 863.

Since 2004, community groups and initiatives established by FRCs have created 168 job opportunities. Sixty two of these created by groups and initiatives established during 2011.

As mentioned, many of these community responses were established by FRCs that were working in partnership with other development programmes. During 2011, FRCs were either 'solely' or 'mainly' responsible for 76% of all community responses. This represents a notable increase on the 2010 figure of 69%.

Figure 6: Degree of FRC Responsibility for Community Responses established during 2011 (total = 305)
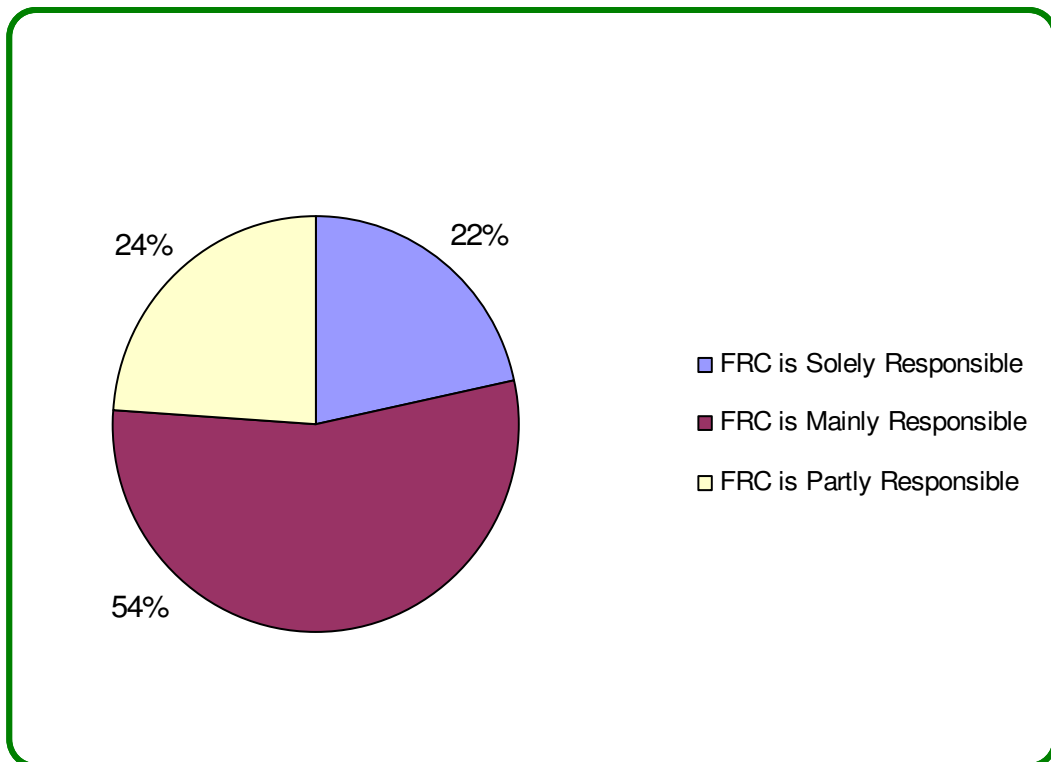
A comparison of the 305 community responses established by FRCs during 2011 indicates that FRCs located within Dublin were significantly more likely than FRCs located outside of Dublin to be 'solely' responsible for the establishment of community responses. Whereas FRCs located within Dublin were 'solely' responsible for the establishment of 27% of community responses during 2011, the corresponding figure for FRCs located outside of Dublin is 23%.

Figure 7: Degree of FRC Responsibility by Location of FRC (Dublin = 22; outside of Dublin = 283)
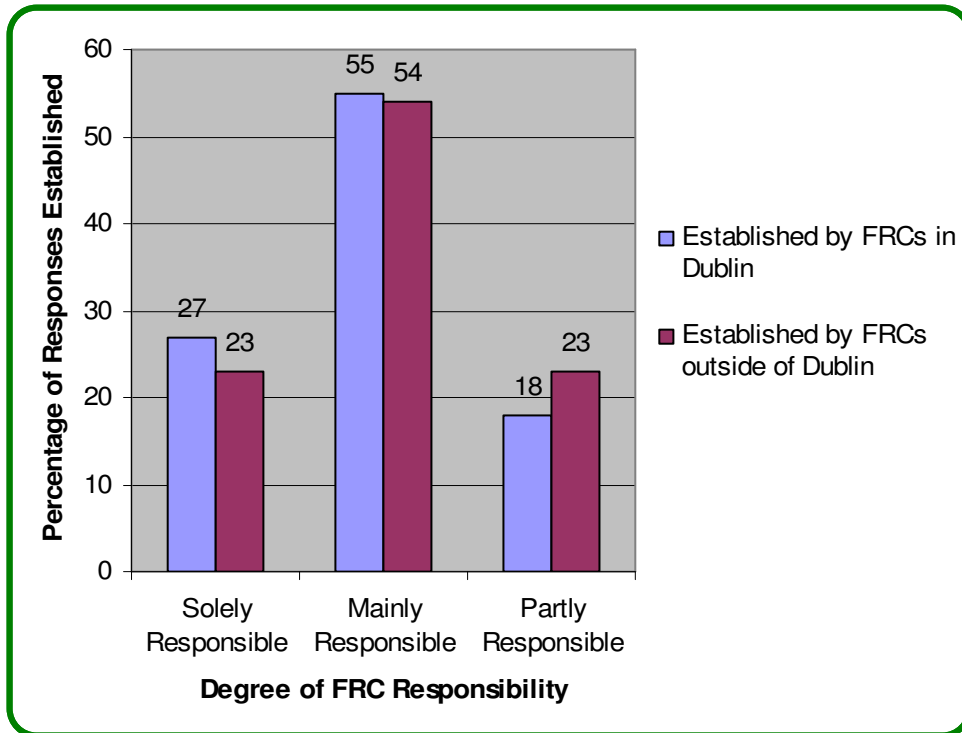
The extension of this tendency is reflected in the fact that Dublin FRCs identified themselves as being 'partly' responsible for only 18% of community responses established during the year while those FRCs located outside of Dublin identified themselves as 'partly' responsible for 23% of community responses established.

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.

Twenty eight community responses were established by the FRCs using SPEAK FRC 3 during 2011.

The need for FRCs to empower local individuals, families and communities to take ownership of local community responses is central to the community development approach to family support employed by FRCs.

However, when asked to describe what steps were being taken to make each of these 28 groups and initiatives more independent of the FRC, no data was provided for 27 cases. Only in the case of the men's group established by Mountview FRC were efforts to promote greater ownership among group participants articulated.

Meeting the challenge associated with building the capacity of local individuals, families and communities to assume control and ownership of local responses is a key characteristic that distinguishes the work of FRCs from other locally based service providers.

Section 6   Supporting Community Groups and Initiatives that were established Independently of FRCs

Alongside working to establish new community responses, FRCs act to promote self-reliance and autonomy among existing community groups and initiatives. Many of these community groups and initiatives were established before their local FRC; others were set up more recently but there was no FRC involvement in their establishment.

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

Many FRCs also provide meeting spaces for families and community groups or initiatives. Meeting spaces are also used by other service providers to deliver services on an outreach basis within local communities.

Supporting community groups and initiatives that were not established by FRCs promotes the following programme outcomes adopted in the *Strategic Framework for Family Support within the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme* (2011):

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

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

Data relating to the supports provided to community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs concerns the nature and frequency of the supports provided to existing groups and the target groups they represent.

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK FRC 2.75 system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Data related to helping community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs to access funding, develop their organisational structures and to address a specific policy issue is entered under the heading 'helping existing groups'. Data related to providing these community groups and initiatives with administrative supports and access to a meeting space is collected under the heading 'front of house administrative supports'. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Outputs in relation to Supporting Community Groups and Initiatives that were established Independently of FRCs

During 2011, over 1,400 community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs, were supported by their local FRC:

- 649 groups were supported to access funding opportunities
- 397 groups were helped to develop their organisational or management structures
- 359 groups were helped to tackle particular development or policy issues.

These figures represent a minor decrease on corresponding figures for 2010 when 1,641 existing community groups and initiatives were supported (752 with funding opportunities, 452 with organisational development and 437 with particular development or public policy issues).

Figure 8 demonstrates the variety of target groups with which these existing community responses are working[1]. During 2011, the target groups that were most frequently the focus of the community groups and initiatives in receipt of support from FRCs were Women, Older People and Men. The most significant change in focus relates to the percentage of these groups and initiatives targeting Men (54% of groups and initiatives in 2010 to 65% in 2011). The percentage of existing community groups and initiatives targeting Unemployed people and LGBT communities also increased markedly since 2010.

Figure 8: Target Group focus of Community Responses established Independently of FRCs, 2011 (n = 1405)
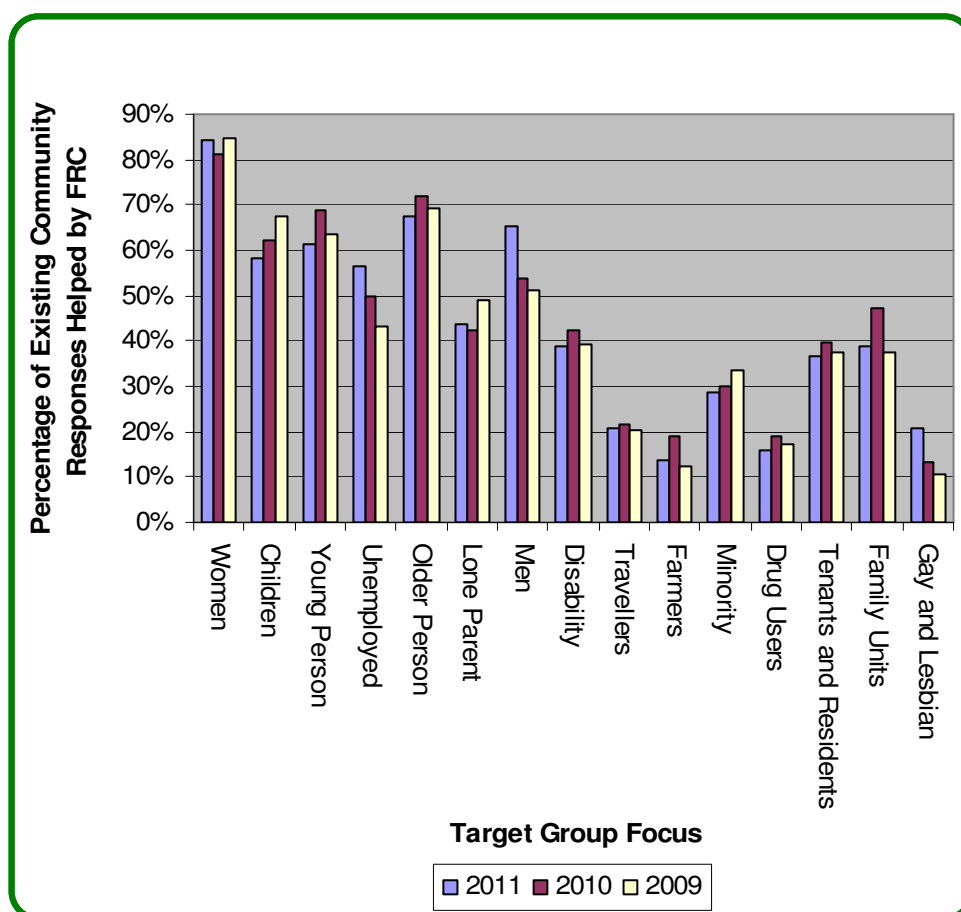
It is noteworthy that the increase in attention directed at these three target groups by community responses established independently of FRCs echoes the increased focus of community responses that were established by FRCs during 2011. Table 5, in Section 5, revealed that the number of community responses established by FRCs

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

focusing on unemployment more than doubled during 2011. Similarly, Table 7 shows a marked increase in the number of community responses established by FRCs to focus on Men and LGBT communities.

It is clear from Figure 9 that the priority assigned by community groups and initiatives established independently of FRCs to various development issues has remained broadly consistent over time. That said, 2011 did see a notable increase in the number of existing community groups and initiatives addressing employment, mental health and the environment.

Figure 9: Development Issue focus of Community Responses established Independently of FRCs, 2011 (n = 1405)
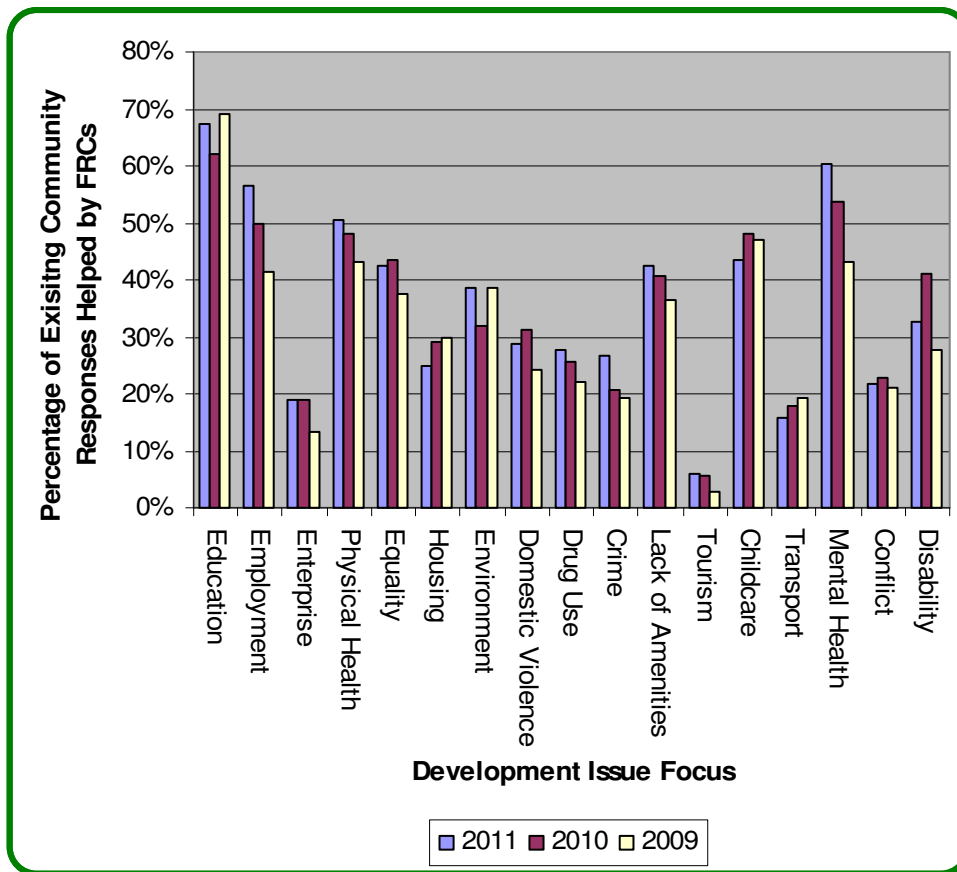
Taken together, Figures 8 and 9 reinforce the prominence accorded by community responses that were established by FRCs (Section 5) to unemployment and mental health and their impact on men in particular. The strength of this reflection suggests an extensive, sweeping, response on the part of the community and voluntary sector as a whole.

During 2011, FRCs were visited 36,862 times by community groups and initiatives seeking to access administrative supports in the form of computers and related information and communication technology as well as phones, photocopiers and fax machines. This figure equates to an average of 1.45 visits to each FRC during each working day. This is broadly in line with the corresponding figure for 2010 of 33,395 visits.

FRC meeting rooms / premises were used a further 20,361 times during the year by community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs. This represents a slight decrease on the corresponding figure for 2010 of 21,815 times. This number includes the number of times FRC meeting rooms / premises were used by service providers such as the Citizens Information Service, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and the Health Service Executive. This figure equates to each FRC making meeting rooms / premises available an average of .8 times each working day.

The breadth of community groups and initiatives using FRC administrative supports, premises and meeting rooms spans local informal groups to national public sector organisations such as the Health Service Executive and the Gardaí:

> 'The provision of space for other groups to meet is a significant function of our FRC. The local youth theatre meets here weekly. Groups such as the GROW, AWARE, Al. Anon. and RAPID hold regular meetings in our building. The Local and Community Development Programme maintains its presence in the town through space provided by us. The Department of Social Protection holds appeals clinics here regularly and the HSE use the building for supervised access meetings [of families] and also to provide ante-natal support.' **Le Chéile FRC Mallow**

> 'We are the only provider of administrative services for organisations and businesses in [this] rural community. The nearest provider offering similar services is 16 kilometres away.   We have excellent facilities with rooms and offices of all sizes for community and other groups to hire…During holiday period we provide a tourist information section for visitors as the nearest Tourist Information Office is 30 kilometres away…The library situated in the

front of house is a vital service in a rural community.' **Mevagh Family Resource Centre**

The extent to which FRC premises act as focal point within local communities is evidenced by the following examples:

'Our organisation now runs two large premises that accommodate a very diverse range of community groups and activities as well as a Job Club office and Drop-in Centre. The annual footfall in these premises is well in excess of 100,000 annually.' **St. Canice's Community Action Ltd**

'While our catchment area comprises approximately 6,000 people, we continue to have a large number of visits from [organisations located] outside our catchment area for conferences, etc.' **Fatima Groups United**

Apart from FRC premises, many communities do not have anywhere to access affordable administrative supports or meeting spaces.

'There is no community centre in Westport. [Without us] groups would have to pay for hotel rooms to meet in. The FRC provides them with a place to meet where they can hear of other events and activities happening locally.' **Westport FRC**

'The FRC has been able to provide facilities and premises for a number of organisations who would otherwise have difficulty meeting with their client group.' **Hill Street FRC**

The following comments made by FRCs illustrate the benefit to community groups and initiatives that were established independently of FRCs of being able to access the support of FRCs:

'Without our FRC many other smaller groups would not survive. The impact on our community from help provided to other groups is very positive. For example, we helped a group access the funds which allowed non Irish born

41

students living in our community, who would otherwise be unable to afford it, participate in integration-based activities.' **Gort Family Resource Centre**

'The impact of our helping other community groups [is that] local people developed leadership skills to identify issues/needs in their own community and worked to address these issues. It also enabled people to actively participate in local decision-making structures relating to planning, environment, health, etc.' **St. Brigids FCC**

The unique approach taken by FRCs when supporting existing community groups and initiatives was stressed by a number of FRCs:

'Our assistance to these community groups supports people to be more proactive themselves. It has empowered people…to deal with issues in their own lives be it parenting skills, overcoming a disability, etc.' **Hospital FRC**

Providing support to such a variety of community groups and initiatives further cements the position of FRCs as focal points for local community activity:

'All [the groups we help] benefit from the opportunity to network provided by their shared association with the FRCs as they address varied issues of equality, disability, training, etc.' **Breffni FRC**

One FRC noted that the benefit of such extensive contact is experienced by all parties, including the FRC:

'Working with other groups, both in the local community and in the larger Athlone area, is productive and beneficial to the working of the FRC. Collaboration [results in] joined-up thinking that is effective and timesaving.' **Monsignor McCarthy Family Resource Centre**

Given the harsh economic climate, the value to local communities of having access to qualified, professional, development workers is considerable. While over the half the qualitative comments entered into the database relating to this working method (28)

referenced the challenge of meeting the demand for supports, only one FRC noted an increase in capacity in this regard:

'Due to the employment of a development worker in 2011, we have increased our capacity to facilitate new groups and to further develop existing ones.'
Hillview FRC

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.

The most frequent uses to which FRC premises were put by other organisations included:

Meeting space for community / voluntary groups	605
Clinics hosted by external service providers ('other')	250
Once-off community events	136
(Non FRC related) Counselling sessions	110
Clinics hosted by Citizens Information Service	48
Clinics hosted by Money Advice and Budgeting Service	39
Family Case Conferences	31

Section 7   Providing Education and Training Opportunities

The provision of education and training is a core activity for many FRCs. FRCs either directly provide, or arrange for the provision of, adult education and training opportunities. Adult education was defined by the [then] Department of Education and Science as 'aspects of further and third level education, continuing education and training, community education, and other systematic learning by adults, both formal and informal' (Department of Education and Science 2000, p.12).

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

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

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

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

Note on Methodology

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

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK FRC v2.75 system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is

entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections. All data relating to the identified impact of this work is entered in a facilitated meeting of Volunteer Directors.

Outputs in relation to Providing Education and Training Opportunities

Numbers accessing training and education opportunities through FRCs have increased dramatically during 2011:

- 17,870 people completed education courses
- 11,610 people completed training courses
- 7,722 people completed self development courses.

These figures represent a very significant increase on the corresponding figures for 2010 where 14,331 people completed education courses, 10,082 people completed training courses and 6,044 people completed self development courses.

In total, the number of people completing education and training courses during 2011 increased by 6,745, or 22%, on the figure for 2010. In the case of education courses, the percentage increase between 2011 and 2010 is a remarkable 24.7%. At least 27 FRCs provided training that was accredited by FETAC.

Some individual FRCs account for a substantial proportion of these outputs. Close to 2,000 people completed education courses provided by Clara Community and Family Support Centre. A further 1,816 people completed education courses provided by Balally FRC. In relation to learning opportunities that are characterised by a vocational element, 1,359 people completed training courses provided by Focus FRC and over 900 people completed training courses provided by Newpark Close FRC. The FRCs that recorded the highest numbers completing self development courses were Raheen Community Development Group (567 people) and Cherry Orchard FRC (309 people).

AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, has recently amended its estimate of how many adult learners there are in Ireland. Currently, it suggests that 'every year approximately 300,000 adults participate in education in both formal and

informal settings in Ireland. There is no formal comprehensive database of statistics for participation in adult and community education courses available nationally, but AONTAS endeavors to maintain relevant statistics on an ongoing basis.' (AONTAS 2012). Accepting this estimate implies that over 10% of all adult learners in Ireland are facilitated by an FRC.

Data recorded by FRCs during 2011 affords a valuable insight into the type of person accessing their education and training opportunities (Figure 10). It is important to note, however, that membership of some programme target groups is not always self-evident. For example, whether or not a course has participants that are farmers or are Travellers may not always be obvious to the course administrator. For this reason, figures relating to participants' membership of these target groups should be regarded as indicative only.

Figure 10: Percentage of Education and Training Courses with Participation from Programme Target Groups, 2009-2011
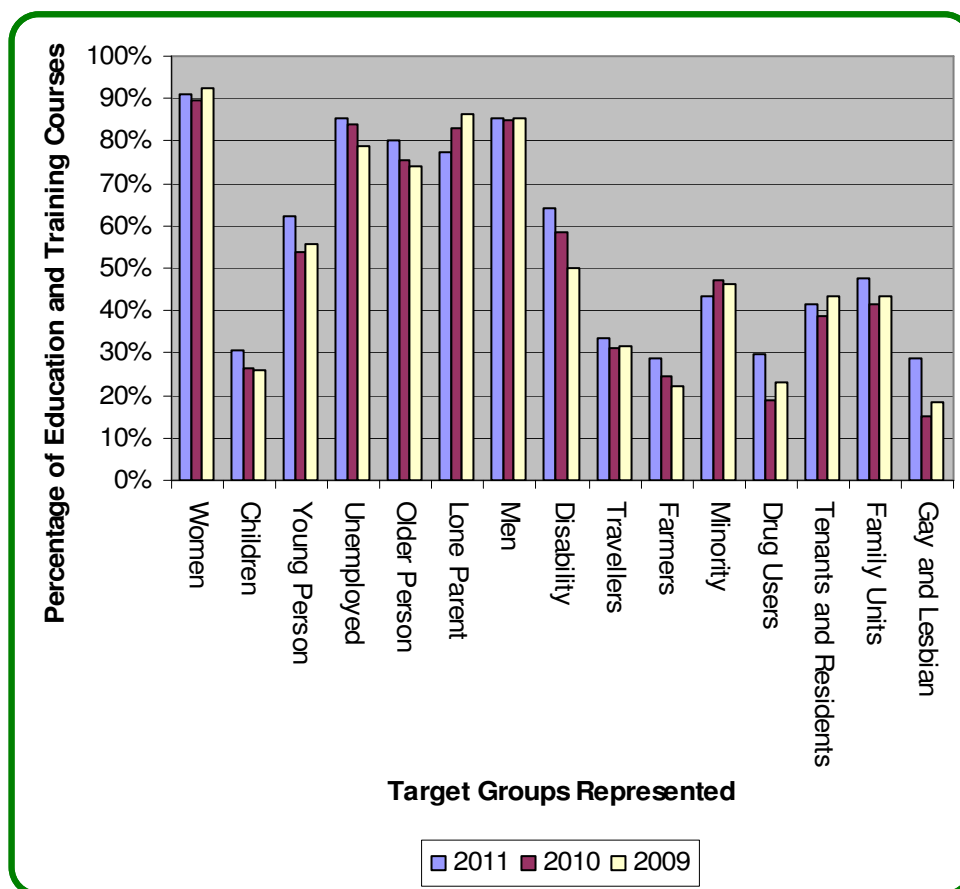
The three target groups with the highest rates of participation in education and training opportunities are Women (on 91% of courses), Men (on 85% of courses) and Unemployed people (on 85%) of courses. Farmers (28%), members of LGBT communities (28%) and Drug Users (29%) are least likely to be represented on courses. As mentioned above, participation rates for these target groups are very difficult to estimate. The figure for Family Units refers to participants that are participating in a course in their capacity as a family member. For example, parents on a parenting course or drug awareness course.

The most notable increases in participation on education and training courses administered by FRCs between 2010 and 2011 are recorded in relation to members of LGBT communities, Drug Users and Young People. In contrast, fewer courses had representation from Minority Groups and Lone Parents.

Themes addressed in education and training courses administered by FRCs are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Percentage of Education and Training Courses addressing Development Themes or Topics, 2009-2011
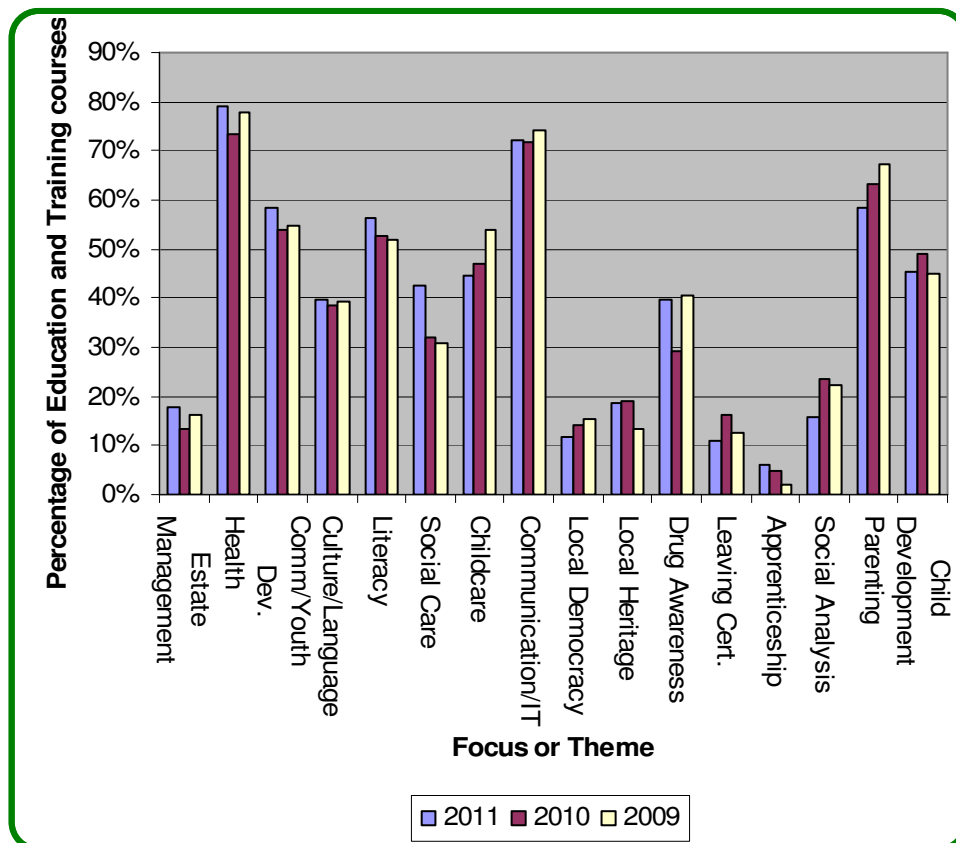
Figure 11 illustrates that many education and training opportunities administered by FRCs encorporated a strong vocational slant. For example, 72% of all education and training courses involved some element of Information and Communications Technology learning, 11% were focused on achieving a Leaving Certificate and 6% involved apprenticeships. Other themes, such as adult literacy, have a clear relevance in terms of vocational opportunities but are also relevant when considered in light of self development or education in a more general sense.

Many courses addressed themes that have no obvious vocational relevance such as social analysis, local democracy, community development and estate management. These themes contribute to the FRCs' goal of building capacity among local individuals, families an dcommunities. In terms of adult education, the importance of these themes was recognised in *Learning for Life*, the Irish Government's White Paper on Adult Education. This document placed a clear emphasis on citizenship, participation and 'community life' and identified six priority areas within Irish adult education that needed to be developed: consciousness-raising, citizenship, cohesion, competitiveness, cultural development and community development (2000, p.28).

The value of these education and training opportunities to local individuals, families and communities was stressed by FRCs in the qualitative data inputted to the national programme database.

> 'Over a third (34%) of the population in our catchment area have only primary education. We work to encourage these people back into the education system by providing 'first step education' and by meeting the needs of people at their level. We place great emphasis on making people feel welcome, safe and at ease and encourage people to learn at their own pace.' **Cherry Orchard FRC**

The readiness of FRCs to explore innovative approaches to achieving participation from the most vulnerable members of their communities is evident:

> 'We ran a parenting course for ten parents who are resident in an Integration and Reception centre in [name of nearby town]. Providing a parenting course in this centre was a significant breakthrough for the FRC. The provision of the course had to be negotiated with the owners of the centre. The backing of the

HSE for the course was critical to getting agreement from the owners.' **Le Chéile FRC, Mallow**

The benefit of participation in education and training opportunities is often experienced beyond the individual participant concerned. For example:

'[We heard] anecdotal evidence of a positive spin-off in other areas of the participant's life. A knock-on effect in terms of pride and a change in perception among the participant's children was noted by the Home School Liaison Officer.' **Clara FRC**

Breffni Community Development Co. was one of the many FRCs to identify the value of providing education and training opportunities as a means of establishing a relationship with local families that can be built upon:

'We estimate that 90% of family members who access education and training opportunities at Breffni also avail of at least one other service, for example, Information Centre, Shop or Childcare. We estimate that 65% of people who avail of training and education opportunities at Breffni avail of at least two other services available through the FRC.' **Breffni FRC**

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.

FRCs often worked in partnership with other organisations when providing education and training opportunities. Foremost among these organisations were the VECs (who worked with FRCs in 31% of cases).

Other principal working partners included FÁS (in 10% of cases), An Garda Síochána (in 10% of cases), a Local Authority (in 9% of cases) and the Department of Social Protection (in 9% of cases).

Section 8   Providing Information and Advice

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

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

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

Depending on the nature of the information and advice provided by an FRC, the achievement of other programme outcomes may also be advanced. For example, providing information relating to a family's social welfare entitlements may promote the programme outcome of achieving greater economic security. Similarly, advising a family member of a training opportunity may promote the programme outcome of supporting active learning.

Note on Methodology

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

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK FRC v2.75 system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Outputs in relation to Providing Information and Advice

In total, FRC staff and volunteers directly provided 157,402 people with information or advice during 2011. This is equivalent to an average of just over 6 people receiving information and advice from each FRC every day.[2] This figure represents a major increase on the 2010 figure of 136,675 people; an average of just over 5 people per FRC each day.

A further 65,675 people were referred onward to other organisations or services by FRCs during 2011. Again, this is a significant increase on the number of referrals made by FRC during 2010 (56 030 people).

Two FRCs accounted for a high percentage of this output. Whereas the average FRC provided approximately 1,500 people with information and advice during 2011, St. Brigid's FCC and Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC recorded providing information and advice to 14,570 people and 10,000 people, respectively. St. Brigid's FCC also recorded making 15,710 referrals during the year. These FRCs also recorded the highest outputs in relation to this working method during 2009 and 2010.

Figure 12 illustrates the percentage of FRCs providing information and advice to each target group. This figure demonstrates that Men, Women, Lone Parents and the Unemployed are accessing information and advice from virtually all FRCs. As might be expected, the percentage of FRCs that recorded providing information and advice to members of LGBT communities, Farmers and Children is far lower. This is unsurprising as these target groups may not be present in the catchment area of all FRCs (for example, Farmers in urban areas) or might not be readily identifiable (for example, a gay man or a lesbian).

Between 2010 and 2011 the percentage of FRCs providing information and advice to members of an LGBT community experienced the most significant increase. The greatest decrease was recorded in relation to Older People. Interestingly, the percentage of FRCs providing information and advice to Unemployed people also decreased during 2011.

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[2] Where 252 working days constitute a year.

51

Figure 12: Percentage of FRCs Providing Information and Advice to Programme Target Groups, 2011
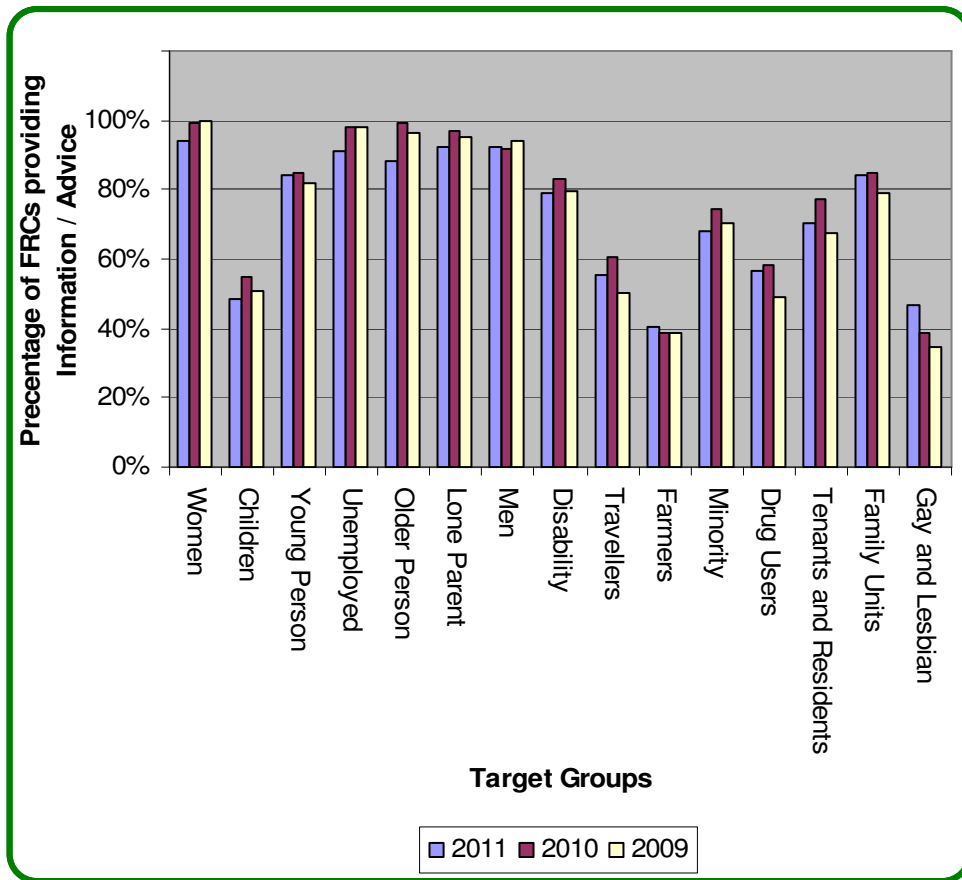
FRCs were asked to identify the services and organisations to which they referred people during 2011 (Figure 13). As in previous years, the Citizens Information Service, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and the Vocational Educational Committees were the services to which the highest percentage of FRCs were making referrals.

Figure 13: Percentage of FRCs Making Referrals to Services and Organisations, 2011
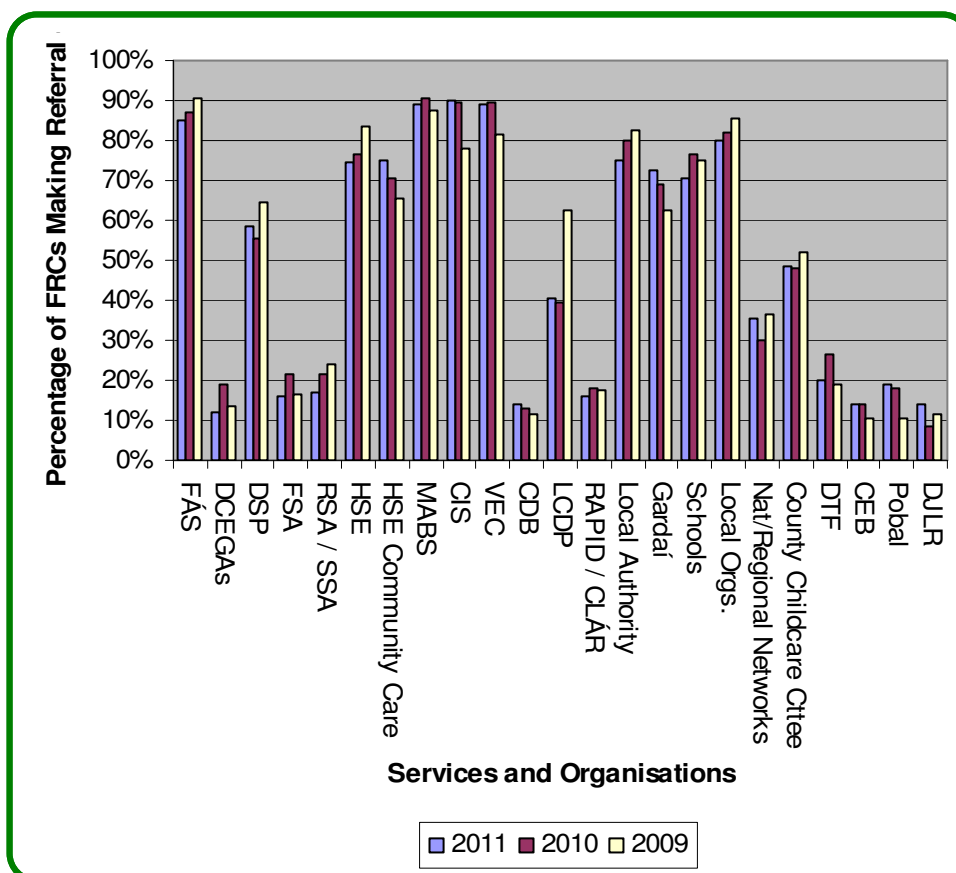
A comparison of the outputs of Dublin based FRCs to those FRCs located outside Dublin reveals that Dublin FRCs, on average, provide considerably more people with information and advice (1,704 people) and make a greater number of onward referrals (697 people) than do those located outside of Dublin (1,525 people and 639 people respectively). This is in keeping with data collected in previous years. However, the difference between Dublin and non-Dublin based FRCs is considerably less pronounced than it was during 2010 when Dublin based FRCs provided information and advice to 48% more people than did FRCs located outside of Dublin.

When commenting on the benefits of this working method, FRCs frequently referred to their role as a bridge between local communities and mainstream service providers. For example:

> The FRC has become the cornerstone of the community over the 12 years we
> have been operating. The FRC is a point of contact for people seeking

information on benefits, FÁS/Solas courses and training. For statutory agencies we are also the first point of contact.' **Mevagh FRC**

'People come here with enquiries that they would not feel comfortable discussing with agencies based outside of the community.' **Arden View Community & Family Resource Centre**

'A substantial number of individuals continue to use the outreach Information Services provided by Loughrea FRC as a first port of call before making any contact with any other organisations or government departments. This appears to be particularly true of individuals that are newly unemployed or are unfamiliar with the social welfare system.' **Loughrea Family Resource Centre**

The welcoming and accessible atmosphere found within FRCs was noted as a factor contributing to the success of FRCs in providing information and advice:

Advice and information is often given in an informal atmosphere over a cup of tea.' **Hill Street FRC**

'With all the changes in government schemes…it is difficult to get accurate information and not always easy to get in touch with mainstream organisations. Community members feel much more confident when they talk to us as our staff are patient and understanding.' **Cáirdeas, Kilmovee FRC**

The benefit of having a high profile within local communities is cited repeatedly by FRCs as a major factor contributing to the outputs achieved in relation to this working method. Nine out of ten FRCs distribute a community newsletter and approximately two thirds of all FRCs have an internet presence.

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.

The highest numbers of people were provided with information relating to the following issues:

Employment and Enterprise issues	2720 people
Social Welfare entitlements	1930 people
Family Support and Counselling services	1650 people
Mental Health services	670 people
Housing entitlements	328 people
Back to Education entitlements	335 people
Drug and Alcohol related services	315 people

When asked about the nature of referrals being made, a clear distinction was evident between two types of referral practice. Approximately 80% of referrals involved 'signposting' people to other services. In these cases people were provided with contact information and left to use it on their own volition. In the remaining 20% of cases, people were actively supported in making contact with service providers.

People were most frequently 'signposted' onto:

Employment services	2400 people
Family Support services	825 people
Education providers	685 people
Training providers	480 people

People were most frequently actively supported to contact:

FÁS	230 appointments made
Citizens Information Service	220 appointments made
Counsellors	210 appointments made
Money Advice and Budgeting Service	185 appointments made
Community Welfare Officers	145 appointments made
Community Gardaí	57 appointments made

Section 9   Hosting Counselling Services

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

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

> Hosting counselling contributes to the programme outcome of being healthy, both physically and mentally.

Note on Methodology

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

Quantitative data is entered in the Outputs section of the SPEAK FRC v2.75 system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of this work, FRC staff do not have access to the appointment schedules of counsellors. To complete this section of SPEAK FRC, the relevant quantitative data was requested from counsellors delivering the service and inputted during the SPEAK FRC Outputs team meeting. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Outputs in relation to Hosting Counselling Services

A total of 5,025 people received counselling through FRCs during 2011. This represents a marked decrease on the 2010 figure of 5,587 people.

Over 17,000 individual counselling sessions were delivered during the year. This figure breaks down into:

- 7,239 sessions concerning 'Relationship'
- 4,036 sessions concerning 'Bereavement'
- 2,657 sessions concerning 'Separation'
- 3,440 sessions concerning 'other' topics.

When comparing the number of sessions delivered during 2011 to those delivered during 2010 a decrease is evident in the number of sessions dealing with relationships (9,337 in 2010), separation (3,014 in 2010) and those classified as 'other' (4,531 in 2010). However, the number of sessions addressing bereavement increased from 3,849 in 2010.

When considering factors that contribute to the outputs achieved in relation to this working method, two major themes emerged in the comments made by FRCs.

Firstly, the delivery of the service within the community makes it accessible to people that have no access to transport or are limited in their freedom to travel. For example:

'One of the main issues highlighted through our Community Audit was poor access to counselling due to long waiting lists and the poor transport service to Letterkenny where most if not all support services are located. That people can attend services on their own 'doorstep' has had a significant impact locally.' **Raphoe Family Resource Centre**

'Providing counselling in-house allows those that need counselling immediate access to the service.' **Ballyfermot Family Resource Centre**

'People are supported through each stage in life…from the cradle to the grave. The FRC is known locally as the place to go for information, support and counselling.' **Family Life Centre, Boyle**

Secondly, providing a subsidised service ensures that it is accessible to all individuals and families. For example:

> 'Counselling can be very expensive, and by providing an affordable service (at 5 euro a session), more people are able to avail of the service.' **Cherry Orchard FRC**

> 'The centre employs up to seven counsellors and the need for this service is very high. This service is the only one provided locally at a charge that service users can afford to pay. The counselling on offer in the centre addresses relationship, bereavement and separation and there are many people on a waiting list to avail of these services.' **Spafield FRC**

Alongside those who accessed professional counselling services through their FRCs, a further 15,069 people benefited from informal one-to-one support. The nature of this work is captured by the following data entries:

> 'Over 2011 there continued to be people that visited the FRC in a state of upset and stress and who needed the immediate informal support of FRC staff. Individuals have subsequently told us that being treated in an empathetic manner and having the space to be able to compose themselves made them feel respected and supported.' **Loughrea FRC**

> 'Being the "first port of call" for local people who are often in crisis is a huge responsibility. They can be assured of a friendly reception. Often, taking the time to listen can diffuse a stressful situation. Furthermore having access to the appropriate referral information ensures that individuals and families can access specialist supports more easily.' **Rosemount Community Development Group**

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.

Women are more likely than men to access counselling services provided by FRCs. During 2011, 57% of adults accessing counselling services were women; 43% were men.

Fifteen percent of all those who accessed counselling provided by FRCs were children.

Section 10   Contributing to Policy Work

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

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

Note on Methodology

Quantitative data relating to networking activity and attendance at seminars is entered in the Outputs sections of the SPEAK FRC system during a team meeting to ensure that double-entry cannot occur. Qualitative data is entered in both the Outputs and the Impacts sections.

Outputs in relation to Local Networking and Policy Work

During 2011, FRCs contributed to 1,090 conferences. The development themes addressed by these seminars and networks are illustrated in Figure 14.

Conferences addressing the development themes of education, childcare and equality were the most frequently attended by FRCs during 2011. Conferences addressing Tourism, Housing and Transport were the least frequently attended. This mirrors exactly the development themes of the most frequently and least frequently attended conferences during 2010.

The 2011 figure of 1,090 represents a very significant fall of 27% on the 1,493 conferences attended during 2010.

Figure 14: Number of Conferences Attended by FRCs by Key Development Theme (total = 1,090), 2011
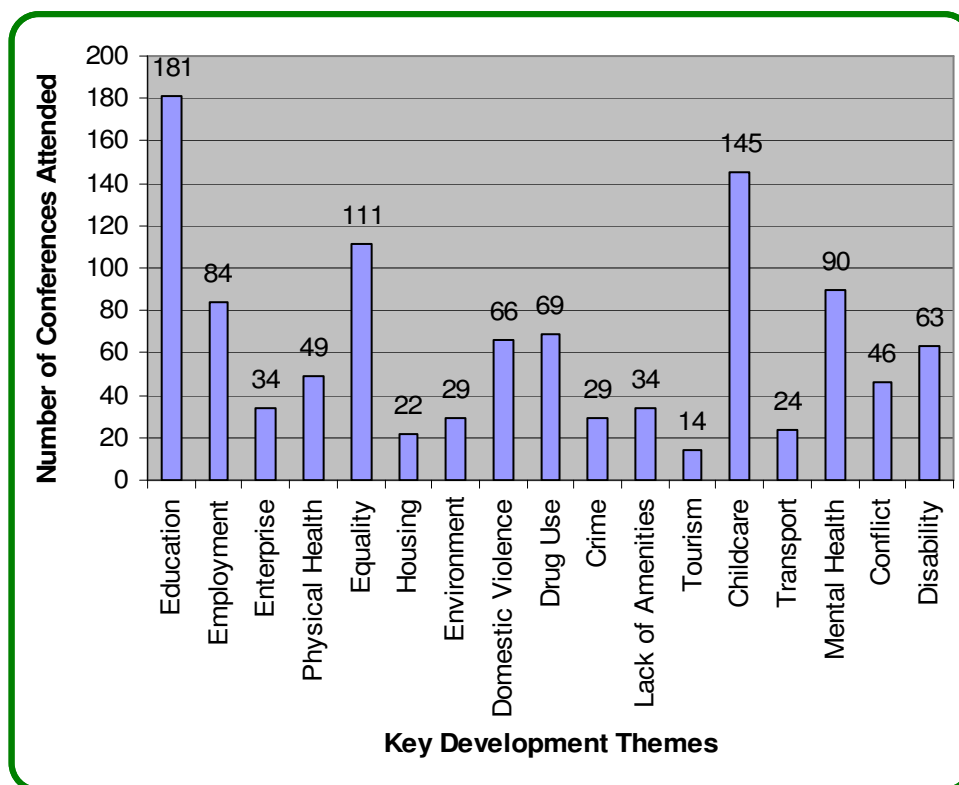
Over one quarter of comments recorded by FRCs relating to this working method (31) referenced the cost, in terms of both time and money, of attending conferences and other policy related events. This may account for the reduced rate of attendance at conferences during the year.

A clear distinction exists in terms of attending conferences between those FRCs located in Dublin and those located outside of Dublin. Whereas the average Dublin FRC attended 20 conferences during 2011, the average FRC located outside of Dublin attended only 9. This distinction is in keeping with data collected in previous years.

FRCs identified policy work as a mechanism for making decision makers aware of the experiences of families and other service users and community level. For example:

> 'Having a voice at the tables where policy can be influenced is becoming a burning issue for many FRCs. We bring grass roots experience which can be lacking.' **South West Kerry Family Resource Centre**

'[Policy work] provides a mechanism for FRCs to feed back to regional and national structures regarding the issues that are being faced by individuals and families in the community.' **St. Brigid's FCC**

The benefit of undertaking policy work in partnership with other FRCs, at county, regional or national level, was noted by a number of FRCs:

'During 2011, the Regional Forum identified the issue of suicide and suicide prevention as a common policy issue across all of the Family Resource Centres in the region. Subsequently funding was successfully applied for and a part-time suicide prevention worker has been employed within the region for an initial period of one year. The worker will work with the Family Resource Centres to develop a common Code of Practice for FRCs in the region in relation to suicide.' **Loughrea FRC**

'Through our active involvement in the Regional and National Fora we assist in highlighting policy issues and suggest ideas on how to progress these at national level.' **Listowel Family Resource Centre**

More detailed data relating to the work of four FRCs using the SPEAK FRC 3 system revealed the following in relation to this working method.
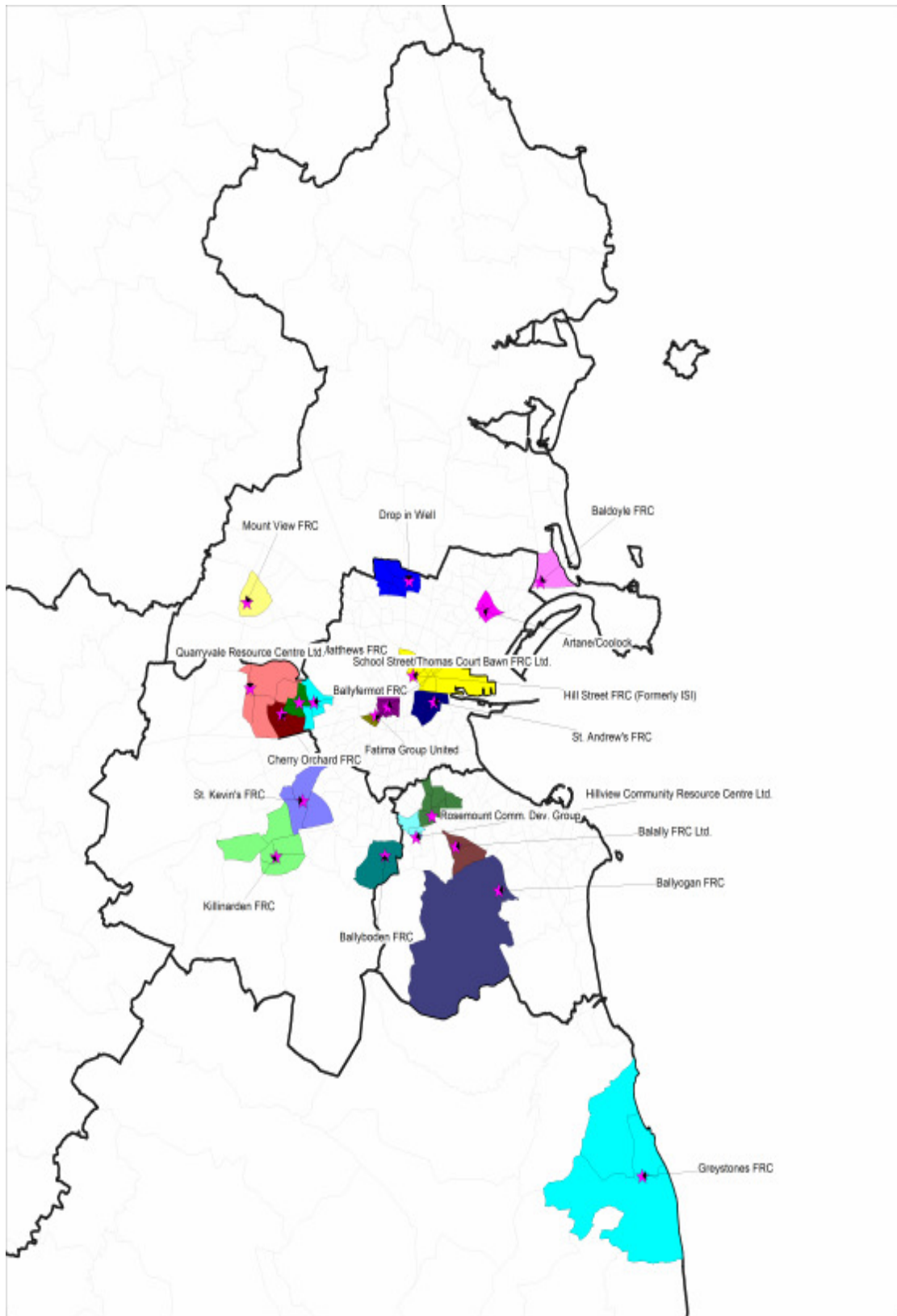
The groups of people that FRCs expected to benefit most from their policy work were:

Teens at Risk   Benefiting from 20.7% of policy initiatives
Women   Benefiting from 19.9% of policy initiatives
Unemployed   Benefiting from 18.7% of policy initiatives
Young Person   Benefiting from 18.6% of policy initiatives
Children   Benefiting from 14.3% of policy initiatives

Figure 1: Family Resource Centres located outside Dublin

Developed by Trutz Haase for the Family Support Agency, 2011

Figure 2: Family Resource Centres located in Dublin

Developed by Trutz Haase for the Family Support Agency, 2011

Appendix Two   List of FRCs

Aonad Resource Centre

ARD Family Resource Centre

Arden View Community & Family Resource Centre

Artane Coolock Resource & Development Centre

Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Balally Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Baldoyle Family Resource Centre

Ballina Family Resource Centre

Ballyboden Family Resource Centre

Ballyfermot Family Resource Centre

Ballyhaunis FRC

Ballymote Family Resource Centre

Ballyogan Family Resource Centre

Ballyspillane FRC

Breffni Community Dev. Co. Ltd.

Bridgeways FRC

Buds FRC

Cairdeas Kilmovee FRC

Cara House FRC

Cara Phort Family Resource Centre

Castlebar Le Chéile FRC

Castlemaine Family Resource Centre

Cherry Orchard FRC Ltd.

Clann Resource Centre

Clara Community & Family Support Centre Ltd.

Claremorris FRC

Clones FRC

Cobh Family Resource Centre Ltd.

CONNECT Family Resource Centre

Croom Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Curragh Pride FRC

Donegal Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Downstrands Family Resource Centre

Droichead Family Resource Centre

Droichead na Daoine

Drop in Well FRC

Duagh Family Centre

Dunfanaghy Community & Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Dunmanway FRC

Easkey Community Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Ennistymon Family Resource Centre Ltd.

FACT Ballincollig Family Resource Centre

Family Life Centre

Fatima Groups United

FOCUS Family Resource Centre

Forward Steps FRC Ltd.

Gort Family Resource Centre

Gorey Family Resource Centre

Greystones Peoples Project

Hill Street FRC

Hillview Community Resource Centre Ltd.

Hospital Family Resource Centre

Kells People's Resource Centre

Kerryhead/Ballyheigue Family Resource Centre

Killaloe/Ballina FRC

Killinarden Family Resource Centre

Killorglin Family Resource Centre

Kilrush Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Knockmay Family Resource Centre

Le Chéile FRC Mallow

Listowel Family Resource Centre

Loughrea Family Resource Centre

Lus na Greine FRC

Mevagh Family Resource Centre

Mill Family Resource Centre

Millennium FRC

Middleton Community Forum Ltd.

Mohill Family Support Centre Ltd.

Monsignor Mc Carthy Family Resource Centre

Mountview Resource Centre

Moville and District Family Resource Centre Limited

Mullaghmatt Cortolvin FRC

Newbridge FRC

Newpark Close FRC

Quarryvale Community Resource Group

Raheen Community Development Group Ltd.

Raphoe Family Resource Centre

Rosemount Community Development Group Ltd.

Sacred Heart FRC

School St. FRC

Shanakill FRC

Shannon Family Resource Centre Ltd.

Shannow Family Resource Centre

Sligo FRC

Solas Resource Centre

South West Kerry Family Resource Centre

Southend Family Resource Centre

Southill FRC

Spafield FRC

St Johnston & Carrigans FRC

St Kevin's FRC

St. Andrew's Resource Centre

St. Brigid's Family and Resource Centre

St. Brigid's Community Centre

St. Canice's Community Action Ltd.

St. Matthews Family Centre

St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre

Tacú Resource Centre

Taghmon FRC

Teach Oscail Resource Project Ltd.

The Caha Centre

The Forge FRC

Three Drives FRC

Trim Family Resource Centre

Tubbercurry FRC Co. Ltd.

Westport FRC

Appendix Three   List of SPEAK User Resources

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

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

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

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

- Instruction Sheet: Making SPEAK FRC Returns

Appendix Four   List of SPEAK FRC target groups

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

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Abbreviations

FRC	Family Resource Centre
FSA	Family Support Agency
RSA	Regional Support Agency
SSA	Specialist Support Agency
FCSRCP	Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme
SPEAK	Strategic Planning, Evaluation And Knowledge-networking
LA	Local Authority
EU	European Union
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
HSE	Health Service Executive
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service
CIS	Citizens' Information Service
CDB	County Development Board
CCC	County Childcare Committee
DTF	Drugs Task Force
CEB	County Enterprise Board
DJLR	Department of Justice and Law Reform
DCEAGs	Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCRGAs	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DSP	Department of Social Protection
LCDP	Local and Community Development Programme

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