

## **Liffey Champion**

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### **Curran seeks additional resources for family resource centres**

Additional resources for family resource centres run by Tusla were sought in the Dáil by Dublin Mid-West Deputy John Curran.

Historically, he said there were 109 family resource centres, approximately 45 of which work from a base of three core staff, while the remainder work with two. “The problem is that the additional funding will not be sufficient to allow some of these family resource centres which operate in disadvantaged areas an opportunity to grow,” he said. “Having met representatives of some of the family resource centres, while one-off grants are always welcome, it is very hard for centres to plan from one year to the next without a sustainable level of core funding. The challenge I am meeting is that a substantial number of centres which have only two core staff and which are operating in areas experiencing significant disadvantage cannot seem to obtain the additional funding required from Tusla to transition from a base of two staff to three. That is the challenge we are facing.”

In reply, Minister Katherine Zappone said the Government has provided additional funding of almost €3 million for family resource centres in 2018. “As part of this allocation, I am pleased to confirm that additional funding of €10,000 will be made available to each family resource centre,” she said. “Tusla will have discussions with centres about service needs, funding and staffing resources.”

The Minister said the family resource centres are independent organisations which are managed by voluntary boards of management which represent the local community. “The centres operate independently of Tusla,” she said. “Each centre is responsible for the recruitment of employees and the terms and conditions under which they are employed. The Deputy may also be aware that last week Tusla announced once-off funding for small capital works of €2.12 million for the 109 existing family resource centres.”

### **Kenny highlights plight of victims of domestic abuse**

Women who are victims of domestic abuse and in receipt of social welfare payments are being informed by the Department of Social Protection that they are in danger of losing their single parent payments unless they try to obtain maintenance from their abusers and are being put at risk by having to contact their abusive partners for financial support, Dublin Mid-West Deputy Gino Kenny told the Dáil.

In response Minister Regina Doherty said the Family Law Acts are the civil legislation that requires a man or woman, who wants to claim maintenance from their spouse, to go to family mediation or seek redress through the courts. “There is a condition in the one-parent family payment in my Department that a parent must make all reasonable efforts to get maintenance from the other parent for the upbringing of their children, which is as it should be,” she said. “However, in the past week a very brave young woman went public with her story of how she

fell between the cracks of what should have been a robust process but was a process which actually failed her. I met that lovely lady and her gorgeous little man on Friday and we spoke at length of her experience. I heard of the language that was used towards her and the letters she received and I gave her my commitment that I would resolve the issue. Since then, I have met with Women's Aid which is kindly going to take the letters away and redraft them so that, if they were accidentally received by someone in a vulnerable position, they would not make that person as fearful and full of dread as Kate - which is not her real name - was during the week. They will return the new draft to me in the next couple of weeks.”

The Minister added that if a woman or a man arrives in a local office and tells of an experience of domestic violence, they would be believed. “There will be no requirement for court orders or protection orders or other legal structures in such cases,” she said. “We will believe the person presenting and we will make changes to our internal IT systems so that their electronic record shows no letters for maintenance recovery will ever again be sent to them.”

### **Harder now for second-hand buyers to move on**

Changes to the mortgage lending rules of the Central Bank mean it has become harder for second-time buyers to move on, Fiannna Fáil North Kildare Deputy James Lawless told the Dáil.

“We are all well aware of the chronic difficulties in the housing market,” he said.

“Apparently, the change is based on a presumption that second-time buyers are more settled and secure than first-time buyers. While that might be the position in a normally functioning market, many people coming out of negative equity and a recession are not in that position. This issue has a knock-on effect on supply because first-time buyers who face a lack of new builds will not be able to buy a home in the second-hand market which has been throttled.”

That, of course, in turn, has a knock-on effect on the rental market as there is no supply at that stage, he said. “The whole pyramid is throttled. I am aware that there is a limit to the extent to which the Government can instruct the Central Bank, but there are fora such as the Central Bank Commission in which policy matters can be discussed. I am sure it is not beyond the ingenuity of the Government to tackle this issue in other ways also. This is a real issue for many buyers and it affects the market as a whole. I hope the Government can address it.”

In response, Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe said the Government does not play a role in any decision the Central Bank makes on criteria for access to loans to purchase homes. “The only legislative relationship in this area requires that we be informed of what the Central Bank is doing, but it makes its decision and announces it,” he said. “As the Deputy said, there are other measures at which we are looking to increase the supply of homes. There are also measures in the Finance Bill which I hope will be passed in the Seanad soon. I hope those measures will address some of the issues raised by the Deputy.”