

New Report Finds Family Care in Ireland under Severe Threat

Minister Hanafin Launches National 'Listening to Carers' Report

Family care in Ireland is under severe threat as the current model of care proves unsustainable. This is the finding of a new report, 'Listening to Carers', based on national consultation with family Carers. The report was launched by Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin, T.D.

"This report reinforces anecdotal evidence that family care in the home is no longer a viable long-term solution under Government's current residual model of care", says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "The report finds that family care in Ireland is under severe threat due to increasing female labour market participation, an ageing population, longer life expectancy and inadequate supports and services. The clear message is that family carers are deeply dissatisfied with their current situation and ambitious action is urgently required in the upcoming National Carers Strategy".

The Carers Association in partnership with Caring for Carers Ireland and Care Alliance Ireland, held a series of 8 nationwide consultation forums scoping the views and issues of concern to family carers. The results are presented in the new report 'Listening to Carers' which was submitted by the Carers organisations to inform the development of the National Carers Strategy which is expected in Autumn 2008.

Most carers prefer to care for their loved ones in the home but the report finds this unsustainable in the long-term and there are few alternatives due to the absence and inadequacy of residential care and comprehensive community support services. The 'Listening to Carers' report identifies three key pillars the Carers Strategy must address:

1. A fair shouldering of the caring responsibility by the State
2. Adequate income support for carers
3. A range of support services that target and meet carers' needs

Enda Egan, C.E.O., The Carers Association states that "this report indicates that Irelands 161,000 family carers are requiring a completely new approach, relationship and interface with the state giving them greater recognition and support in their roles." He also urges government to take a visionary approach to the national carers strategy, being mindful that it has an eight year lifespan and not allow current economic climate to dictate its content.

"The current care in the home situation, while being most cost-effective for Government, is characterised by a lack of clarity and consistency which makes it very difficult for people to plan the care of their loved ones. There is a lot of pressure on the Government to shoulder more of the caring responsibility and deliver real change, particularly in terms of Home and Community Services, Income Supports and Services for Carers, in line with the findings of the 'Listening to Carers' report". says Mr. Egan.

The 'Listening to Carers' Report was funded by the Equality Authority under the European Year of Equality for All.

Pictured at the launch: Frank Goodwin, Chairperson of The Carers' Association, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D. and Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers' Association.

ENDS