



# The Carers Association Election Manifesto 2011





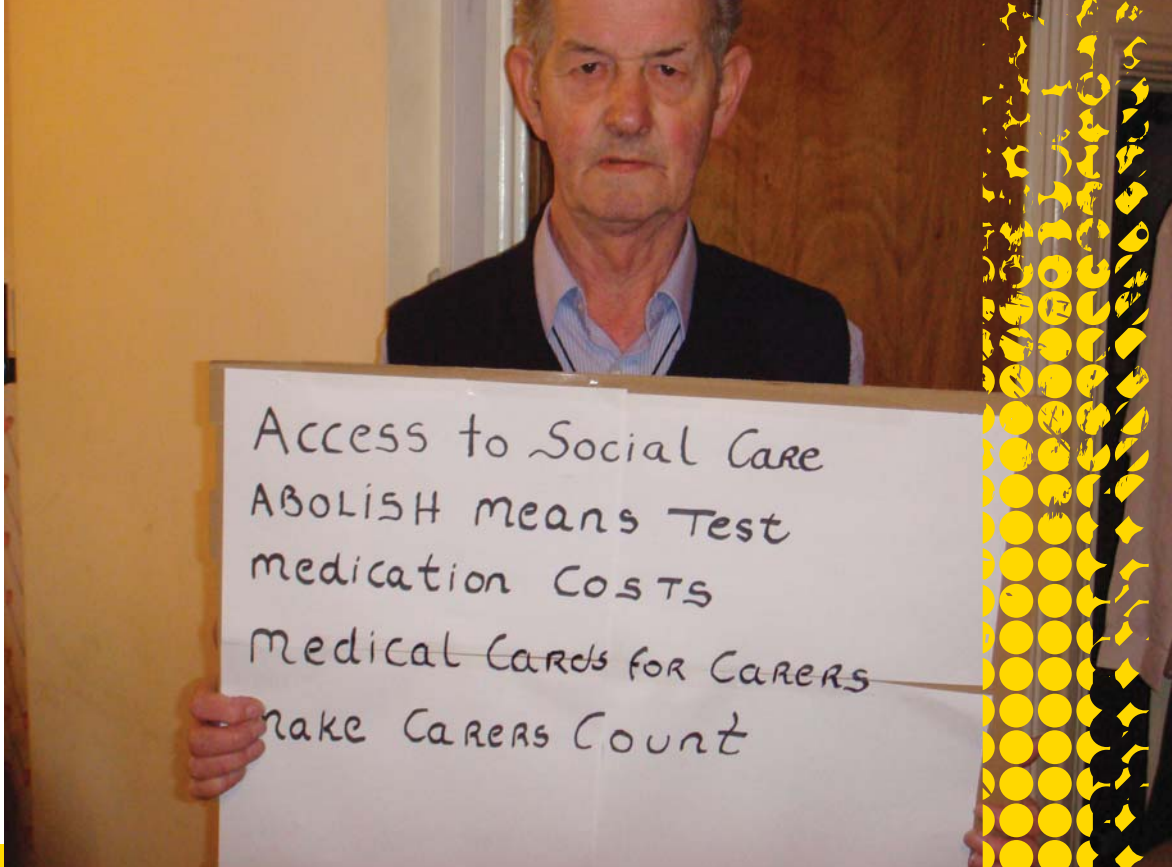
# Hear our voice

- Ireland's 160,917 Family Carers provide 3.7 million hours of care each week which equates to a contribution to the Irish economy of €2.5 billion each year. This means the average fulltime Carer contributes €40,500 of caring work each year.<sup>1</sup>
- There are 40,883 fulltime Carers in Ireland. More than the 39,000 nurses employed by the HSE. These Carers alone work 2.5 million hours each week and contribute €1.6 billion to the Irish economy each year.
- In 2010 the CSO estimated that Ireland could now have as many as 274,000 Family Carers and 57,500 fulltime Family Carers.<sup>2</sup>
- By 2021 Ireland will need an additional 45,000 Family Carers to support the increasing population of people with disabilities and dependencies in old age.



1. While the Census of Population 2006 enumerated the number of Carers in Ireland as 160,916, anecdotal evidence suggests that the actual number of Carers is much higher, as evidenced in the QNHS 2009.

2. Quarterly National Household Survey: Caring Module. Quarter 3, 2009.



## **Election 2011: Act Now for Ireland's Invisible Workforce**

Family Carers are one of Ireland's greatest national resources. Despite this Carers are dissatisfied and frustrated with their current situation. Many are overburdened, feel undervalued and unrecognised and are unable to have any life of their own. As a result the sustainability of family care is under threat and will become increasingly jeopardised unless the fundamentals of Carer policy in Ireland are given a new direction and impetus - one that fits with the realities of caring in Ireland today.

This manifesto has been produced following ongoing consultation with Family Carers so that all election candidates and political parties can know and address the issues faced by Carers and ensure that the voices of caring families are heard in Election 2011.

**The Carers Association calls on Ireland's political parties to act now and make the following commitments for Family Carers:**

- Pledge to publish the National Carers Strategy.
- Pledge that every Carer will have the right to an adequate income, have opportunities to work and have a life outside of their caring role.
- Pledge to Provide Adequate Services for Family Carers and Support Carers own Health and Wellbeing.
- Provide supports for Young Carers.
- Promote equality and social justice for Family Carers.

# Pledge to Publish the National Carers Strategy

Ireland's ageing population and the shift towards community health care makes it imperative that Carers are put firmly at the centre of the Government's agenda. The publication of a National Carers Strategy, setting out the Government's vision for family and informal Carers and establishing a set of goals and actions in areas such as income support, health care, services, housing, information and transport, is a vital first step in recognising the enormous contribution of Carers and will be integral in supporting our health services. Carers' needs are diverse and cannot be addressed by a single Government Department. The National Carers Strategy provides a timely opportunity to promote interdepartmental collaboration and information sharing in responding to these needs.

## The Facts

- National Carers Strategy committed to in Towards 2016 and Programme for Government.
- No legislation or policy in Ireland to protect Carers.
- Carers play an increasing role in the provision of health care services, with less patients in our hospitals, shorter hospital stays and an increasing focus on community care.
- Strategy is integral to recognising the extraordinary contribution made by Family Carers in Ireland and to ensuring that Carers will be available in the future to meet Ireland's growing care needs.

## What Carers Need

- Recognition and social justice.
- Fair shouldering of care between the family and the State.
- Access to a range of support services that target and meet their needs.

## Action needed from Ireland's next Government

- Publish the National Carers Strategy, setting out their commitments in relation to income supports, healthcare, training, the labour market, transport, housing and information services for Family Carers.
- Given the importance of the role of Family Carers, ensure that organisations supporting Carers are adequately funded.

# **Pledge that Every Carer will have the Right to an Adequate Income, have Opportunities to Work and have a Life outside of their Caring Role.**

Family Carers are one of the most socially excluded groups in Irish society and face significant hardship and disadvantage as a direct result of their care-giving responsibilities. Caring can adversely affect a Carers' financial situation, if a Carer has to give up work to become a full-time Carer or meet the significant financial costs associated with caring such as fuel costs, special dietary requirements, transport and medical expenses. Carers also experience social isolation and often miss out on important social relationships, including those associated with work, education, or leisure. The disadvantage experienced by Carers is further compounded for those Carers who experience overlapping or multiple disadvantage, for example young Carers living in a one parent family, those living in remote areas or those who are unemployed.

## **The Facts**

- Carers Allowance is mean tested and worth a maximum of €204 per week. To qualify Carers must provide fulltime care. This means that many Carers work for much less than the minimum wage.
- Carers are the only Social Welfare recipients who must work fulltime for their payment. 50,000 people receive either Carers Allowance or Half Rate Carers Allowance and 71,000 receive a Respite Care Grant. This means that 21,000 Carers provide fulltime care but do not qualify for Carers Allowance.
- There are 90,544 Working Carers in Ireland of which 14,068 provide full-time care.  
The extra cost of caring for someone with a high level of disability is approx €40 per week.

## **What Carers Need**

- Not to suffer financial hardship and disadvantage because they provide care to a loved one
- For Government to recognise and value their work
- Not be regarded as economically inactive but valued for their enormous contribution.
- To have a life outside of caring

### Action needed from Ireland's next Government:

- Protect Carer payments including Carers Allowance, Half Rate Carers Allowance, Carers Benefit and the annual Respite Care Grant.
- Abolish the means test for Carers Allowance.
- Remove the Habitual Residence Condition for Family Carers.
- Carers Benefit model should be similar to that of Maternity Benefit where the amount of benefit is based on a percentage of the applicant's salary.
- Support Working Carers by putting in place legislation which provides Carer friendly working arrangements and ensures that Carers are not discriminated against by employers.
- Reduce costs that impact disproportionately on Carers including prescription charges, medical expenses, hospital parking etc.



## Pledge to Provide Adequate Services for Family Carers and Support Carers own Health and Wellbeing.

Caring can have a significant impact on Carers health and wellbeing, ranging from back injury to stress, worry and depression. Carers are considerably more likely to be in poor health, both physical and emotional, than people without caring responsibilities. Research shows that Carers often ignore their own health needs because of the demands of their caring role and the costs involved in seeking

medical help. It is important that Carers find a balance between caring and looking after their own health needs. Respite care is regarded as one of the key support interventions to alleviate the stress of caring and to support the health and wellbeing of the Carer.

### **The Facts** 3

- 28% of Carers describe their health as 'Not Very Good' or 'Not at all Good'.
- More than half of Carers say they are mentally and physically drained.
- Almost half of Carers surveyed have been diagnosed with a mental health problem.
- Almost one in five Carers have been diagnosed with depression.
- Forty per cent of Carers believe additional respite services would help improve their health.

### **What Carers Need**

- A Medical Card for all fulltime Carers
- Right to a Carer Needs Assessment
- Better and more flexible back-up support services, especially home-help and in-home respite care.
- Psychological support

### **Action needed from Ireland's next Government**

- Provide a non-means tested Medical Card and annual health check to all full-time Carers.
- Introduce a legal right to a Needs Assessment for Carers to include health and social needs.
- Funding for Home Care services should be increased to ensure that Carers and older people can receive them at adequate levels.
- Increase the provision of respite services including emergency, residential and in-home respite.
- Immediately end the inequitable practice whereby families in receipt of Carers Allowance are being excluded from receiving Home Help services.
- Provide funding to allow all fulltime Carers access to accredited training in caring skills which would be linked to the National Framework for Qualifications.
- Fund the development of specific back to work training programmes for former Carers whose caring role has ceased.

# Pledge to provide supports for Young Carers

It is estimated that Ireland could have as many as 28,000 Young Carers aged under 18 years and 52,700 aged under 25 years. Despite this, there is no single dedicated Young Carer support group or service in the country. In 2009, the Office of the Minister for Children commissioned a study on the issues affecting Young Carers in Ireland. The study identified a continuum of caring whereby some caring experiences amongst young people has a largely positive impact while for others the role involves a level of physical or emotional caring that impairs the child's health, development or welfare. Specific negative impacts identified in the research include absence from school or distraction while there, social isolation, illness, worry and resentment and the loss of normal childhood activities and experiences.

## The Facts

- Ireland estimated to have 28,000 Young Carers aged under 18 years <sup>4</sup>
- No dedicated Young Carer services or supports
- No legislation or policy to protect Young Carers in Ireland.

## What Young Carers Need

- To be able to participate fully in education, play, socializing and hobbies
- To be free from inappropriate caring responsibilities
- To have a forum where they can express their views, find support and make friends with other Young Carers.
- More recognition and support from staff in education, health and social services.

## Action needed from Ireland's next Government:

- Provide funding to advance the recommendations emerging from the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Young Carers study.
- Introduce sustainable funding to provide dedicated Young Carer services throughout Ireland. More understanding and "joined-up thinking" across Departments relating to Young Carers.



## Pledge to Promote Equality and Social Justice for Family Carers.

The inequality and injustice facing Family Carers is blatant. Fulltime caring places carers in a vulnerable position of inequality, working exceedingly long hours, inadequate or no supports, high stress levels, lacking essential skills training and with no time for their own needs. Carers face further discrimination when health services assume that families will automatically provide care regardless of whether this impacts on their human or civil rights. A major issue for policy development relates to the value society places on unpaid work such as caring. To date, society has tended to value only work for which payment is received and ignores the value of work such as unpaid caring. This lack of appreciation can be seen clearly in Government's failure to publish the National Carers Strategy.

### The Facts

- Carers provide more than 3.7 million hours of care each week. Replacing this care would cost Government €2.5 billion each year. <sup>5</sup>
- One in five carers spend more than 57 hours per week on caring activities. <sup>6</sup>
- Two thirds of carers report that their own health and lifestyle has been affected by their caring responsibilities. <sup>7</sup>

5. Calculations based on Census of Population 2006.

6. Quarterly National Household Survey, Caring Module Q3 2009.

7. Carer Health Survey: The Royal College of Psychiatrists and The Carers Association 2009.

## What Carers Need

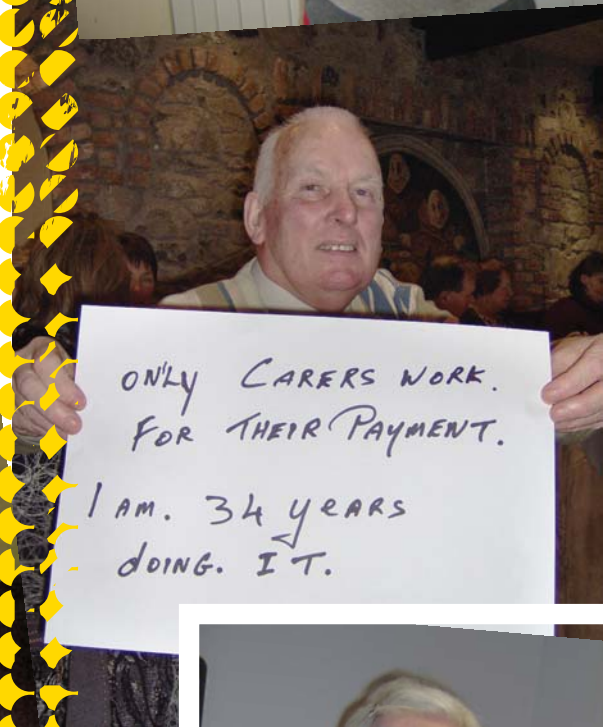
- Not to be discriminated against by Government, employers or society
- To have equal opportunities in the workplace
- To have access to supports and services
- To be recognised and valued for their work and contribution to the Irish economy

## Action needed from Ireland's next Government:

- Implementation of equality legislation ensuring that Carers are not discriminated against.
- The inclusion of Carers as a target group in the social inclusion programme and in all equality proofing measures.
- Creation of policies that promote the value of unpaid work and the classification of Carers as economically active.
- Ensure that there is a robust analysis of the 2011 Census data on Carers to aid planning and development of services both nationally and locally.



# See us for what we do



CARERS AS PERCENTAGE POPULATION 2006 *			
	Carers	Population	% Carers
IRELAND	160,917	3,375,399	4.8
CARLOW	1,677	39,779	4.2
CAVAN	2,553	49,751	5.1
CLARE	4,507	86,977	5.2
CORK	14,783	283,014	5.2
CORK CITY	4,855	101,254	4.8
DONEGAL	5,698	113,838	5
DUBLIN CITY	18,356	430,357	4.3
DUN LAOGHAIRE – RATHDOWN	7,544	158,794	4.8
FINGAL	7,997	187,018	4.3
GALWAY	6,843	124,360	5.5
GALWAY CITY	2,409	61,264	3.9
KERRY	5,892	112,587	5.2
KILDARE	5,961	143,326	4.2
KILKENNY	3,434	68,705	5
LAOIS	2,472	51,895	4.8
LEITRIM	1,205	23,052	5.2
LIMERICK	5,114	104,944	4.9
LIMERICK CITY	2,074	3,168	4.8
LONGFORD	1,381	26,928	5.1
LOUTH	4,226	86,699	4.9
MAYO	5,440	98,430	5.5
MEATH	5,721	124,681	4.6
MONAGHAN	2,283	44,128	5.2
NORTH TIPPERARY	2,705	51,921	5.2
OFFALY	2,691	54,911	4.9
ROSCOMMON	2,567	46,791	5.5
SLIGO	2,484	48,972	5.1
SOUTH DUBLIN	8,346	193,355	4.3
SOUTH TIPPERARY	3,263	65,693	5
WATERFORD	2,491	48,574	5.1
WATERFORD CITY	1,640	36,970	4.4
WESTMEATH	2,862	61,695	4.6
WEXFORD	4,825	102,511	4.7
WICKLOW	4,618	99,057	4.7

\* persons aged 15+ yrs

# Act now for Ireland's Invisible Workforce.

## Have Your Say in Election 2011

View our Virtual Election Campaign and visit: [www.carersireland.com/election.php](http://www.carersireland.com/election.php) Get involved – email or post your picture messages to: [lgreville@carersireland.com](mailto:lgreville@carersireland.com) or [www.flickr.com/photos/carersireland](http://www.flickr.com/photos/carersireland) or at The Carers Association on Facebook. To become a Member go to: [www.carersireland.com/membership.php](http://www.carersireland.com/membership.php) or 1800 24 07 24



## The Carers Association

Ireland's National Voluntary Organisation for and of Family Carers in the home.

National Office, Market Square, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

Tel: 057 9322920 Email: [info@carersireland.com](mailto:info@carersireland.com) [www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com)