

**'Proper Supports for Family Carers will Alleviate National Health Emergency',
says The Carers Association**

The Carers Association says that if Government put in place the proper supports for family Carers this would greatly alleviate the current national emergency. The organisation, currently engaged in Social Partnership negotiations, is calling for the implementation of a National Strategy for family Carers as a matter of urgency in the up-coming National Agreement

Considering the current A&E crisis, the consequences of an ageing population and shortages in the Home Help sector, The Carers Association considers it imperative for Government to introduce a comprehensive package of services and supports for family Carers.

“We are very concerned that over 400 patients who could medically be discharged remain in hospital beds. These patients could be cared for in the community, making these beds available to other patients and easing pressure on the A&E sector”, says Mr. Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. “If Government allocated the necessary resources to support family Carers many of these patients could return home to convalesce. A major change in our society is that traditionally women provided care in the home but due to a number of factors and societal changes this traditional model will become untenable in the future unless Government ensures the proper supports and services are put in place”.

There are now approximately 25% more women in employment and a further 25% in education in comparison to 20 years ago with most families now requiring a dual-income. Therefore, it can be very difficult for family members to stay at home providing full-time care for a loved one. With a projected increase of over 18,000 older people requiring long-term care from 2001 to 2011, there are more and more people requiring care and less people in a position to stay at home to provide this level of care.

“The implementation of a National Strategy and range of support services is vital to aid and enhance the work of family Carers whose role is increasingly crucial in our society to meet the demands of an ageing population and to ease pressures on the health services preventing a national emergency like we have today”, says Mr. Egan. “Community and State resources would be placed under further enormous pressure to provide the 3 million hours of work per week provided by Ireland’s 150,000 family Carers”.

Through negotiation at the current Social Partnership talks, The Carers Association are fighting to achieve the following –

1. The development and implementation of a National Strategy
2. Comprehensive services and supports for family Carers
3. Enhancing and supporting Carers’ health and well-being
4. An adequate and fair system of remuneration for family Carers
5. Education and Training for Carers
6. Work-life balance policies that support Carers
7. Access to up-to-date and accurate information

“We have already met with An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, Tanaiste and Minister for Health, Mary Harney and Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan who agreed the implementation of a National Strategy for family Carers would be a positive means of going forward”, says Mr. Egan. “Family Carers work effectively unpaid and save the state over €1.5 billion per year. The development of this Strategy and support services is vital to put in place the necessary resources for family Carers and if implemented will seriously ease pressure on health services. We want to see the Strategy implemented as a matter of urgency in the next National Agreement”.

The Carers Association is the National voluntary organisation of family carers in the home, providing support services, respite, training and information to carers throughout Ireland. The Carers Association can be contacted on the National Careline Freefone 1800 24 07 24 or see www.carersireland.com.

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For further information and to arrange interview please contact:

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Editorial Note:

Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association is available for interview on request. He is in Dublin today and tomorrow. Interviews can be arranged through Mary on 056-7723211 / 086-3010209

Photography of Enda Egan on own and with An Taoiseach is available if required.