

"The Carers Association urge Minister for Social and Family Affairs not to allow current economic climate to impact negatively on family carers"

The Carers Association, today (Friday 19th September) at pre-budget forum, will urge Minister for Social and Family Affairs not to allow the current economic climate to dictate the content of the National Carers Strategy, which is presently being developed by Government. This strategy must be innovative, forward thinking, providing long term solutions to the everyday problems facing Carers in Ireland today. It should be a visionary strategy outlining how we propose to care for our older people and people with disabilities in Ireland over the coming years.

"The current social partnership agreement, Towards 2016, made a commitment to development of the National Carers Strategy by December 2007. This target has not been met but Government has committed to publishing the strategy by the end of 2008. We urge Government to implement this strategy, so vital for family carers, as a matter of urgency", says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "While we understand that Government is expected to be cautious in its outlook for the forthcoming budget, we urge Government to be mindful of the pivotal role that family carers play in providing high levels of care to older people and people with disabilities in the community".

"There is no question but the most cost-effective option for the state is to support the work of family carers in the home as opposed to the state providing full-time institutional care. Therefore it makes financial sense for Government to implement our recommendations in budget 2009 thereby implementing their own policy of caring for people in their own homes for as long as possible" continued Enda Egan.

Family carers are currently saving the health service over €2.5 billion per year as a result of their full-time care giving.

In addition to increased income and supports for family Carers, The Carers Association is recommending the implementation of three key policies in Budget 2009;

1. Allow family carers work up to 19.5 hours a week, in addition to their caring role and still be eligible for Carers Allowance

2. Allow family carers receive a full Carers Allowance in respect of each person they care for. Current policy only allows a maximum of one and a half Carers Allowances, even if the carer is providing full-time care for two or more people.
3. Address the health and service needs of family carers through a needs assessment for the family carer.

"Family carers usually take on a full-time caring role out of necessity and love for the cared for person. While caring can prove very fulfilling and rewarding, the stressful and frustrating nature of the work can also have a negative impact on the carers own health and well-being", continued Enda Egan. "The forthcoming Strategy must address the needs of the Carer as well as the cared for person through provision of a needs assessment for the carer in their own right."

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.

- ENDS -

NOTE TO EDITOR : A representative from the Carers Association will be available for interview at pre budget forum from 9.30am tomorrow (Friday 19th September) at St. Andrews Resource Centre, Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

For further information :

Catherine Cox, Communications Manager, The Carers Association, 086 8521611
Naoimh Murphy, Purcell Masterson, 086 8122165