

**Tuesday, January 20th**

**12 month delayed National Carers Strategy and proposed cut-backs threaten care in the home**

The Carers Association will inform the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs tomorrow, Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, that any cuts in funding to family carers will have a devastating effect for those struggling to provide care in the home. Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association will outline key priorities for the 12 month delayed National Carers Strategy highlighting issues including protecting current funding to carers and introducing essential carers needs assessments.

“Further delays to the urgently needed National Carers Strategy will grossly undermine the role and invaluable contribution family carers make to our society and health services” says Egan. “It is critical the National Carers Strategy stays firmly on the Government’s agenda to allow the continuation of care in the home, now seriously under threat due to a lack of vital resources. Delaying the National Carers Strategy any longer is a major blow to family carers who save the state over €2.5 billion each year.”

The Carers Association is very concerned that the current economic situation will be used to seriously curtail the scope and effectiveness of the strategy. To enable family carers continue caring in the home the organisation’s Oireachtas submission will highlight essential issues to be addressed in the National Carers Strategy, including:

*Introduction of needs assessment as a legal right*  
*Providing an annual comprehensive health check*  
*Allowing carers to work 19 hours per week and still receive the Carers Allowance*  
*Ring-fencing all current funding provided to carers*  
*Including review mechanisms allowing items to be brought back on the agenda when economic, social and political indicators dictate*

Based on assurances from Government, it was anticipated that the National Carers Strategy, already a year overdue, would be published by Christmas. Carers urgently need this strategy published to formally recognise their contribution as well as address financial and support services issues.

Mr. Egan also expressed Carers concern and outrage at proposed cut-backs on Carers Allowances which are greatly at odds with Government's own policy of sustaining care in the home for as long as possible for older people and those with disabilities.

"Cut-backs in the Carers Allowance will seriously impinge on the ability of carers, many of whom already live on the breadline, to provide adequate care for family and loved ones", says Egan.

"Failure to implement the National Carers Strategy will result in a lost opportunity to significantly address the needs of carers and protect their rights. Any reduction in carers funding will negatively impact on efforts to address the serious financial shortfall currently experienced by family carers, an already marginalised and isolated group."

**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](http://www.carersireland.com)**

**ENDS**

**For further information please contact:**

**Catherine Cox, Communications Manager, The Carers Association 086 8521611**

**Enda Egan, CEO, The Carers Association on 086-6087759**

**Family carers in a variety of caring situations are also available.**