

THE CARERS ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

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Catherine Cox	Deputy C.E.O./Regional Manager
Deirdre Fox	Regional Manager
Ian McDonald	Financial Controller
Blane Sutherland	National Fundraising Manager

FOREWORD

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The one thing that we all share is that at some stage in our lives we will either provide care for another person or we shall receive care. For this reason the issues surrounding carers and family care in Ireland are relevant to every one of us and are crucial to Ireland as a nation socially and economically.

The Carers Association was established in 1987 in response to the need for recognition of family carers and their rights and entitlements. In the following 17 years some advances have taken place but the development of improved rights and service provision for family carers still remains the major challenge facing the Carers Association today. Progress to date has been too slow due to a failure to recognise the economic and social significance of family carers work in the home.

Of Ireland's 149,000 family carers, only 24,000 are in receipt of the Carers Allowance/Carers Benefit. The work provided by family carers has been costed and the saving to the state is billions of euros every year. Many carers work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week yet are not entitled to the same benefits enjoyed by other workers in our society. Our laws and regulations on equality, health and safety, working time, annual leave, sick leave and many others do not apply to family carers. Our constitution provides no recognition or protection for family carers.

The development of this strategic plan is timely given the recent results of the census of population 2002, providing us with the first comprehensive national statistical figures on carers in Ireland. These figures combined with recent reports on Carers by Comhairle, National Equality Authority, Joint Oireactas

Committee on Social and Family Affairs and the O' Shea and Mercer Reports and associated consultation process are aiding the creation of a historical milestone in relation to social policy development for carers.

All of these reports are positive and would appear to be pointing in an upwards direction for carers but nothing can be taken for granted. The Carers Association must do its part to affect positive change within our association and this can be achieved by forward planning and the development of an overarching integrated strategy, which leans on professionalism, innovation and best practices across all internal disciplines, and builds upon all the hard work and achievement of the organisation over the past 17 years.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank staff of the Association for their commitment to Carers and their valuable input into this plan.



Frank Goodwin
National Chairperson

FOREWORD

C.E.O.'s FOREWORD

Given the increases in the number of people receiving care now and in the future, it is essential that the Carers Association, who represent Ireland's 150,000 family carers; plan effectively and strategically for the future. Work on this strategic plan began in December 2003 with an extensive consultation process with carers, staff, board members and feedback from stakeholders. I am confident that this implementation plan is an accurate reflection of all our creative thinking and ideas developed into the essential building blocks, which we will use over the coming 3 years to deliver this ambitious and challenging agenda for change and progression.

The challenges facing us are to reach out to more carers by supporting them, reduce feelings of isolation and lack of recognition and providing a better spread of essential supports, such as information, advocacy, home respite, training and develop more innovative models of support services while continuously placing carer's issues on governments and the public's agenda.

I believe that this document can be much more than a strategic plan, it has been built on many years of experience and solid evidence. This will act as a resource to enhance the formation of meaningful and innovative approaches to recognition and service provision for family carers, which can be used as a guide by stakeholders and other service providers.

We as an organisation commit to carers, our stakeholders and funders to achieve this plan by working in true partnership and consultation while embracing our value for money principles.

This plan, as with any ambitious piece of work, will not be easy to implement and, as with many an occasion in the past, we as staff, board members and volunteers will have to deliver beyond our accumulative sum.

So I invite you to share in our vision and concept of why we are here and look forward to sharing the fruits of our labour with you.

Because remember one day this issue will be yours!

Enda Egan



Chief Executive Officer
The Carer's Association

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1. NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2004 - 2007

Introduction

Our Strategic Plan was developed in consultation with the Carers Association Board of directors, management team and staff. The views of stakeholders including representatives from family carers, the health boards and Department of Health & Children (DoH&C) were also considered. We also took into account the findings of the Capita reports findings.

Organisational Description

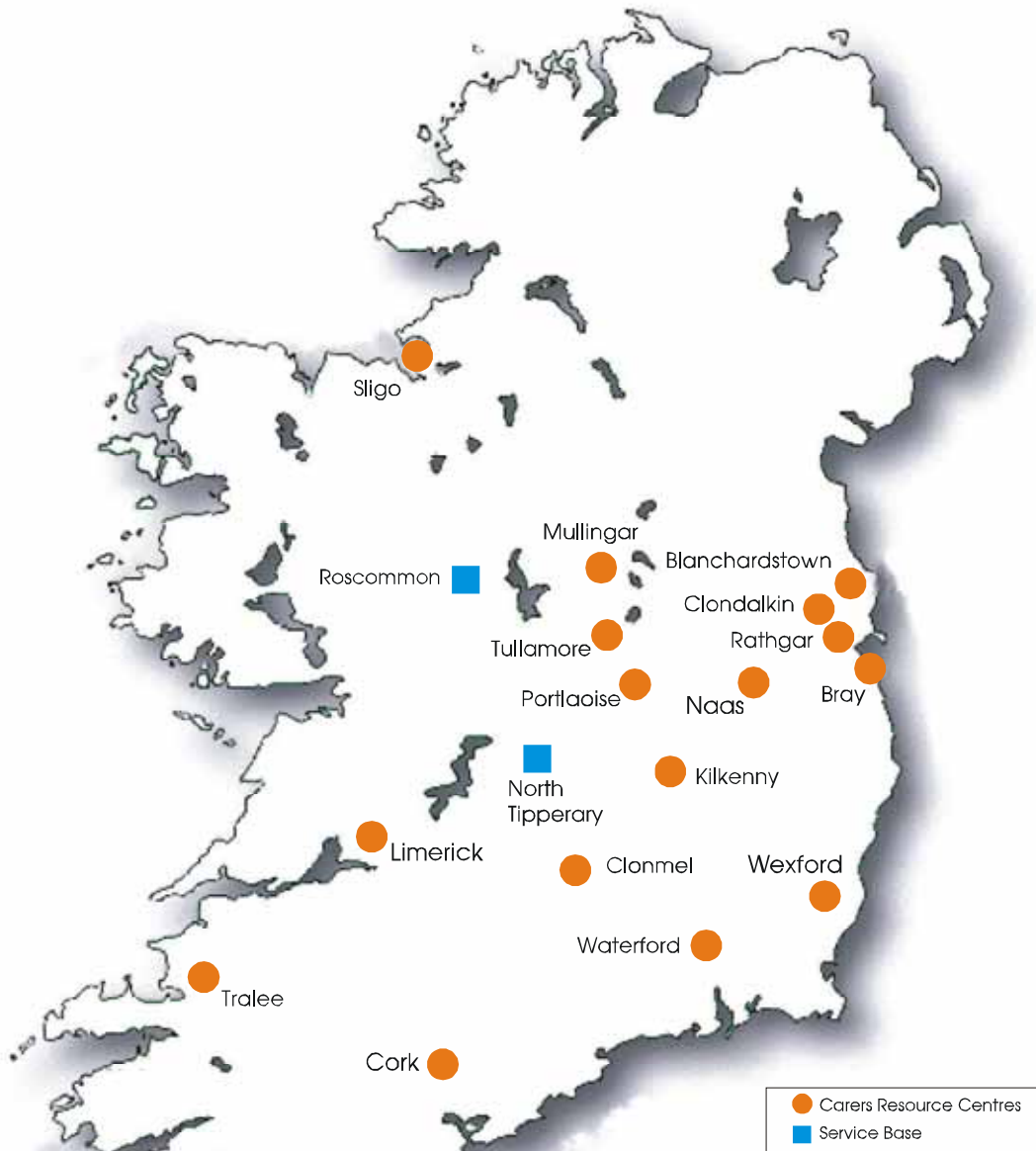
The Carers Association is a national voluntary organisation of family carers in the home who provide high levels of care to frail older people, people with severe disabilities, the terminally ill and children with special needs.

Established in 1987, it is owned and controlled by carers and represents their interests as well as providing a range of supports and services.

High levels of organisational growth occurred between 1998 and 2002, due to a large increase in government funding. The availability of staff funded through the FÁS Community Employment Schemes since 1997 facilitated the consolidation and expansion of services. The Carers Association became members of the Social Partnership in 2002, and committed itself to the Sustaining Progress Agreement 2003-2005.

The Association's national office is based in Kilkenny and provides information, advice and practical support through its 16 Resource Centres and 2 service bases. Currently it supports a staff of approximately 185 employees, of whom 35 are full-time. In addition, it has approximately 4,000 carer's contacts on its database.

Carers Resource Centres



Carers Resource Centres

Blanchardstown	Mullingar
Bray	Naas
Carlow	Rathgar
Clondalkin	Sligo
Clonmel	Tralee
Cork	Tullamore
Kilkenny	Waterford
Limerick	Wexford
Portlaoise	

Both the Department of Health and Children (DoH&C) and the various Health Boards fund the Association and this is supplemented by community project funding (i.e. FÁS community employment scheme) and more recently, dedicated fundraising.

The primary services provided by the Carers Associations centres and service bases are as follows: -

Home Respite Service

- The development of our Home Respite Service provides flexible and practical support to family carers in the home. This allows the carer to take a much needed break from their caring commitment which can be very stressful both physically and emotionally.

Information

- Information for carers on their rights and entitlements.
- Carer's information packs containing leaflets on critical services and supports for carers.
- Freefone National CareLine number 1800 240724
- The Carers Association website (www.carersireland.com)

Training and Education

- Care in the Home course is a City & Guilds accredited training programme for carers and people working in the Caring profession.
- Personal development courses for carers
- First Aid training
- Back to work training programmes for carers
- Go for Life Programmes.

Advocacy and Lobbying

- The Association lobbies politically both at a local and national level. We are also represented on a number of consultative committees, state agencies and boards and are members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of the Social Partnership.

Promotion and Awareness

- The Carer of the Year award
- Conferences and seminars
- Producing videos and promotional materials
- Take Care Magazine – quarterly publication

Mission Statement

“ To provide family carers with emotional and practical supports; to promote the interests of family carers and those receiving care in the home through effective partnership, lobbying and advocacy and to gain recognition and social justice for carers invaluable contribution to Irish Society.”

Values

The culture and services of the Carers Association are shaped by the following values:

- **Family Carer Focus** – Recognition of care in the home as an essential prerequisite for social cohesion and the need to support family carers and care recipients accordingly;
- **Empowerment** – Empowering carers to influence and shape social policy through their involvement in lobbying and decision making.
- **Partnership Approach** – Building strong working relationships and networks with other voluntary and community organisations, governments departments and health boards.
- **Information and Knowledge** – Equipping carers and care recipients with the necessary information and knowledge to enable them to have greater control over their own personal circumstances.
- **Equality** – Promoting equality within the organisation and in society generally to ensure that carers are afforded the same opportunities and resources available to other groups in our society.
- **Valuing Staff** – Provision of ongoing training and development for our staff
- **Accountability** – Accountability in the delivery and management of resources and services to ensure value for money and transparency across the organisation.

2. THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which we operate, both internally and externally, to a large extent determines how we conduct our business and what level of services we can provide. Social and economic policies at EU and national levels and related demographic trends impact on the direction of the organisation and on our ability to deliver our strategic objectives.

External Environment

- the partnership approach to governance and service delivery and the Carers Association membership of the Social Partnership, Community and Voluntary pillar;
- the Sustaining Progress Agreement and the development of a special initiative on care;
- the Review of the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme (O'Shea) and the Report on The Financing of Long Term Care in Ireland (Mercer) and the related consultation process;
- Health Strategy 2001;
- Comhairle Report (2002) – *Supporting Carers*;
- Joint Committee on Social and Family Affairs Report (2003): *Review of Position of Full-time Carers*;
- Ongoing Programme of Reform of the Health Services;
- The central role of the voluntary sector in providing health and social services;
- Government emphasis on greater value for money systems of service delivery;
- The implementation of the Governments white paper on the voluntary/community sector;

- The changing demographics and an increase in the numbers of older people and the number of women in the labour force;
- The quantification (for the first time) in Census 2002 of the numbers of carers and care recipients in the population;
- Uncertainty about the ongoing commitment by Government to funding the FAS Community Employment (CE) programme).

Internal Environment

- Recent restructuring of the Organisation based on the Capita Report;
- Financial Resources – new fundraising structures in place;
- Human Resources -- additional staff have been recruited;
- Implementation of new data base;
- Recruitment of additional new board members;
- Recent awarding of contract from The Western Health Board to provide services to Carers in Roscommon Community Care Area;
- Review of training needs analysis, staff appraisals and implementation;
- City and Guilds accreditation for Care in the Home Training course.

3. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE CARERS ASSOCIATION IN THE FUTURE

In order to continue to deliver quality support services to carers and lobby on their behalf at local and national level, there are many challenges facing the Carers Association over the next three years.

Challenges for the Future

- The Association needs to further develop its network of strategically relevant friends who would promote the profile, raise awareness and increase recognition of carers and work of the Carers Association.
- The Carers Association needs to position its services provision more strategically to ensure better geographic spread in areas where the need has been identified.
- Due to financial constraints our resource centres are spread very thinly across the network resulting in inadequate staffing and administrative support in some locations.
- The Association is dependent on the FAS Community Employment scheme to provide a substantial part of its workforce, income, and services. Any further retrenchment would have serious implications for the work of the organisation.
- The Association needs to standardise its functions and services across its network of resource centres through the introduction of National Standard Operating Procedures.

- Due to a lack of funding, the Association has had to tailor its service to comply with the funding criteria of some local health boards, for example where funding is provided only for services to the over 65 age group. The challenge in the future is for the Association to secure funding to enable it to provide services and supports to all carers, including those caring for children with special needs and younger people with disabilities as well as elders.
- The Carers Association is dependent on the Department of Health and Children and health boards for its funding. As money is paid out on a yearly basis, it makes it difficult to financially plan beyond one year. Obtaining three year programme funding is a high priority for the Association.
- As with any voluntary organisation there is a necessity to balance the need for government funding with the role of an independent lobbying body striving to bring about legislative improvements and policy changes that benefit carers.

Opportunities for the Future

- The Association at board and management level has demonstrated an appetite for change and an ability to implement this change effectively and quickly.
- The Association has the benefit of a socially committed workforce who demonstrates a genuine regard for their clients. This is demonstrated by the individual efforts of staff to deliver a good service on the ground, in what are often difficult circumstances.
- The Association enjoy a good track record in lobbying Government and through the years has had a significant influence on policy development.
- The recent appointment of Mary Kennedy and Mick O'Dwyer as patrons will benefit the Association in raising the national profile and increasing recognition. It may also encourage other celebrities to take an active role in promoting the work of the Association.
- The Association enjoys a good working relationship with the health boards and Department of Health and Children.
- The Association has recently developed a structured approach to fundraising at local and national level with a well defined schedule of activities, which are reviewed on an annual basis.
- The Association has developed a tailor-made Database System to provide up to date statistics and information required by decision makers. These statistics will determine the level of services required in

different areas and help shape service agreements with health boards in the future.

- Government policy supports the principle of assisting people to be cared for in their own community / home. Recent reports advocate the use of flexible care systems designed around individual need and choice. Given that the preference of most people is to receive care in their own homes, there will be a growing demand for the services provided by the Association.
- While there are 149,000 family carers in the country, only 24,000 are in receipt of the Carer's Allowance. This is an ongoing concern for the Carers Association.
- As the voice of carers, the Carers Association feels that the Government's bias toward caring in the community, the preferred care option presents great opportunities for carers to have their rights recognised and supported and services put in place.
- There would appear to be an untapped market opportunity to provide commercial respite services to people who are in a position to pay the market rate for this service.
- The Association has an opportunity to establish services (in partnership with local health boards and based on needs assessment) for family carers in geographic areas which are currently under-supplied by the existing services.
- The Opportunity exists to create strategic linkages with similar organisations with a view to sharing resources. Presumably other

voluntary groups are equally financially strained and would be amenable to explore opportunities jointly. The possibility of creating shared services with health boards or other statutory groups (say Citizens Advice Bureau and An Post) may present further synergies.

- The Carers Association accredited City & Guilds "Care in the Home" course and other personal development programmes (e.g. First Aid) provide carers with the necessary practical caring skills to effectively carry out their role as a carer. Feedback from family carers and those working in the sector suggests that there is a deficit in the provision of training programmes which needs to be addressed.
- As ex-carers represent an important resource, consideration will be given as to how best their support might be brought to bear for the benefit of the Association.
- The proposed re-structuring of health boards presents an opportunity for the Association to work in tandem with the national plan for primary community and continuing care and to develop its services accordingly.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2004 – 2007

The Carers Association has identified the following 11 Strategic Objectives that will set the overall strategic direction of the organisation for the next 3 years. These objectives are as follows: -

1. Services - to provide a range of services to family carers, to ease their burden of care and enhance the life of the cared for person.

Action:

Home Respite: To continue to expand and enhance existing Home Respite Services in line with financial resources, carer's needs and geographical needs.

Information Services: Further development and standardisation of existing information provision and dissemination at local centre level.

Outreach Services: Continuous review of existing outreach services with a view to reducing and expanding this service where demand dictates.

Support Groups: The further development and enhancement of carers Support groups nationally

Innovative Services: Develop new innovative services to meet the needs of carers. Services could include Meals on Wheels, Weekend/Night services and Emergency Home Respite.

Counselling Services for Carers: Develop a national counselling service for carers in line with demand and individual needs.

Social Worker Services: A pilot project to target specific group of carers, i.e. elder carers and young carers.

2. Promotion – To raise awareness and gain recognition for family carers and their valuable contribution to society and promote the work of The Carers Association in its aims to achieve this objective.

Action:

New Logo: To establish a new logo and identity for the re-branding and modernisation of the Association's image.

Updating existing website: Enhance existing website promoting the work of the Carers Association and as an information tool for carers and professionals.

Take Care: National magazine on family carers will be reviewed and published three times a year.

National Carers Day: To develop and establish a national carer's day in the calendar dedicated to family carers.

Carer of the year award: Locate national sponsor for carer of the year award project.

Membership Recruitment Drive: Development of a membership benefits package as part of national promotion campaign.

Definition of Family Carers: Promotional campaign around the definition of a family carer which will be run in conjunction with the relevant government department and aimed mainly at health boards and statutory agencies.

3. Lobbying - to bring about change in government policy, which would have a positive effect on the lives of family carers and cared for persons through the provision of increased supports and services. This lobbying will convey to politicians, department officials and policy makers the valuable contribution of carers to the delivery of health services in our community and the many issues and policy deficiencies that exist.

Action:

Social Partnership/Membership: To use our seat on the community and voluntary pillar of social partnership, to influence and propose social policy changes which will make a real difference to the lives of family carers.

Relationship Building with Minister's, Department Official's and TD's: The Association at Senior Management and Board Level will continue to liaise with relevant Ministers and officials in Government Departments and Health Boards and with TDs as appropriate.

National Strategy for Family Carers: As part of our campaign for greater entitlements and rights for Carers, the Association will be pursuing the Government for a commitment to develop a National Strategy for Carers.

Pre-Budget Submission: Continue to present the government with pre budget submissions annually, based on realistic and achievable targets.

Pre-election Coalition: Create an effective all-inclusive lobbying coalition as part of our next pre election campaign. This will be launched in 2004.

4. Training - To facilitate the smooth running of training for the Carers Association service users so as to improve the quality and standard of care and to confirm our status as the primary caring support organisation in Ireland.

Action:

Training Unit: The development of a stand alone training unit within the organisation

Training Unit Manager: The appointment of a training unit manager to develop a suite of training programmes aimed at family carers and individuals within the caring sector based on identified needs.

Care in the home training course: Further develop the Care in the Home course to a more advanced level with particular focus on certain modules such as First Aid and Safety First (Lifting and Moving).

Developing Relations with FETAC: Furthering relations with FETAC with a view to providing FETAC approved training modules in our resource centres.

Personnel Development: Further development and training of all staff including board members within the Association based on identified needs relevant to their roles.

5. Management Structures - To ensure the existing management structure is responsive, proactive and adaptable in delivering policy developments as directed by the Board of the Association so as to meet the needs of carers, staff and it stakeholders.

Action:

Continuous investment in equipment/technology: We will ensure that systems and procedures are in place to allow the Association to fulfil its goals. This will include investment in equipment/technology to provide accurate, up-to-date statistics and analysis.

Training and development of management team: We will put the necessary structures in place to ensure that the management team is up to date with best management practices.

Resources: The organisation will strive to provide management with the resources necessary to achieve objectives. However, this is contingent upon resourcing strategic priorities within tight financial constraints.

6. Build relevant Networks & Relationships – Build appropriate relationships with Government departments, health boards, voluntary and community organisations.

Action:

Relationships with Health Boards and Department of Health and Children: The successful building of relationships at this level is paramount for the survival and further development of the organisation and we will actively work towards consolidating and enhancing these relationships.

Voluntary Sector Networking: Many opportunities exist for greater partnership between organisations locally and nationally, including and sharing the resources, ideas and information, and we will work towards maximising these opportunities.

Extending our Involvement with Health Boards: The Association will endeavour to build relationships in health boards where we currently provide no services.

7. Research and Policy Development - To progress policy development for carers through research.

Action:

Social Policy Officer: Subject to funding the Association will recruit a Social Policy Officer to further develop the social policy function within the organisation, keep staff up-to-date on new policy developments and represent the Association on various relevant committees and bodies, in particular the Social Partnership forum.

Research: The Association recognises the value of research and analytical data for the progression of both needs led services and policy development for family carers.

8. Human Resources - Position the Association as a first class employer, through valuing employees at all levels and creating effective and efficient Human Resources policies and procedures.

Action:

Human Resources policies and procedures: External human resources consultants will assist in this role.

Pay Structures: A review of current pay structures will be conducted.

Induction Training: The Association recognises the need to enhance our existing induction programme for our new staff.

Lifework balance policy: A life-work balance policy will be put in place to assist workers in combining employment with other responsibilities and choices and to assist the Association in supporting and maintaining a committed workforce.

9. Communication - To ensure clear and open lines of communication internally and externally.

Action:

Update of Website: The Association is in the process of reviewing and updating its website and is exploring the idea of developing an intranet within the organisation.

Staff Notice Board: Information will continue to be communicated on a regular basis through the staff notice board to all staff members.

Communication procedures: The Association will standardise its internal communications procedures to avoid inconsistencies.

10. Fundraising - Implementation of a National Fundraising Strategy to aid the development and growth of the Association.

Action:

Development of Fundraising Strategy 2005 – 2008. This strategy will plan ahead for the future development and direction of the fundraising department. It will be developed by the National Fundraising Manager and implemented in conjunction with the Board and the CEO.

Fundraising Plan for Centres: Fundraising Plans for all centres will be continuously revised and updated, in line with our National Fundraising Strategy.

Membership Drive: It has been identified that membership of the organisation needs to be further developed. This also has the potential to become an additional income stream. Corporate sponsorship is being sought, in order to provide benefits and incentives for Carers and individuals to join the Association.

11. Board of Directors – to ensure that the Board of Directors has specific expertise and skills required to form and direct policy of the organisation.

Action:

Continuation of Recruitment of new Board Members: The Board recently recruited new members with Social, Political and Health backgrounds and will continue to recruit members from Legal, Financial and Commercial Business back rounds.

Ensure adequate representation of carers at Board level: It is important for the Association and also for the Board of Directors to have an adequate representation of Carers and Ex Carers at Board level.

Training and Continuous development of Board Members: The Association recognises the importance of continuously assisting Board Members in developing their knowledge base and skills.

Gender balance: There is a need to ensure equal gender representation at Board level and this will be a factor in recruiting new members.

5. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

An Implementation Plan has been developed to assist management in planning, managing, organising and implementing the strategy. This plan further develops the 11 strategic objectives by setting out the actions required, key performance indicators, responsibility and timescale for completion.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Management team in liaison with the Board to ensure the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. The process will be monitored by Senior Management to ensure it is on track to achieve our objectives. The implementation process will allow for any changes in internal / external environment and will react accordingly. Continued involvement of staff will be crucial to the success of the strategic plan. It is important that both financial and human resources are available to ensure successful implementation of the plan.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is essential that the strategy is effectively monitored and evaluated in order to review progress. Periodic evaluation of strategies, tactics, and action programmes are essential in assessing success of the strategic plan.

Performance will be monitored annually against Key Performance Indicators to evaluate the effect of specific actions on long-term goals and on the organisation's mission. The work of the organisation will be evaluated internally on an annual basis, against the aims and objectives set out in the plan.

GLOSSARY

CARER: A (Family) Carer is somebody who provides high levels of care at home to family members or loved ones, who are frail in old age, have severe disabilities, are terminally ill or children with special needs.

CAPITA REPORT: Capita Consultancy Ltd. is a consultancy agency specialising in the Health Sector. In 2003 they undertook a review of the Carers Association at the request of the Board. This was a root and branch review of the Organisation with the findings forming the directional cornerstone of the Association into the future.

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP: A means of reaching agreement between the Irish Government and various social partners (employers, trade unions, community and voluntary sector, farmers etc.) on issues such as pay, taxes, social welfare and social and economic policies.

HOME RESPITE: A service provided by the Carers Association whereby a trained home respite worker goes into the home of a carer and takes over the duties of the carer giving the carer a break from the caring role. This can include personal care and also light house keeping duties as agreed upon with the carer and cared for person.

SOCIAL COHESION: Bringing together, in an integrated way, social, health, economic and educational policies to facilitate the participation of citizens within society.

SPECIAL INITIATIVE ON CARE: Under Sustaining Progress, (the current agreement between the government and the social partners,) 10 special initiatives are being developed between the partners including one which is a Special Initiative on Care.

FAS COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME: FAS are the national training authority, as part of their brief the administrate community employment projects. FAS grant aid the Carers Association to provide these projects where staff are trained and get work experience within the caring field.

DATABASE: Internal database of carers availing of the Carers Associations supports and services. This database allows us to draw statistics on the needs of carers and their cared for person, the types of illnesses that are most common and the level of support that carers are receiving.

CARERS ALLOWANCE: A social welfare payment made to family carers to a maximum of € 139.60 per week. The allowance is means tested and can only be paid to one carer even where the care is shared.

EMERGENCY HOME RESPITE: Home Respite service provided in the cases of emergencies for example where a carer has to go into hospital and there is nobody to look after the cared-for-person.

CARER OF THE YEAR AWARD: Annual Awards ceremony hosted by the Carers Association which identifies family carers across the country who provides exceptional care to their loved ones. Carers are nominated by their loved ones, families and through local resource centres; there are four regional recipients and one overall award recipient.

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FAMILY CARERS: The Carers Association have called upon the Department of Health and Department of Social and Family Affairs to lead the development of a National Strategy for Family Carers. This strategy will put in place supports, (both financial and services,) that will help to maintain carers in their caring roles over the next 5 to 10 years. It will target specific groups of carers in need of support i.e. young carers, male carers, carers who are elderly themselves. It will ensure that older people and people with disabilities have the choice to remain in their homes, maintaining their independence, where there is a family carer who can, with the proper supports and services look after the person in their own home.

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION: Every year prior to the government releasing their budget voluntary organisations such as the Carers Association present the government with a pre-budget submission which outlines the changes those carers would like to see in the forthcoming budget. This submission could include changes to methods of payment for carers as well as changes required in social policy.

FETAC – FURTHER EDUCATION TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL – make quality assured awards in accordance with national standards within the national framework, creating opportunities for all learners in further education and training to have their achievements recognised and providing access to systematic progression pathways. Their functions include making and promoting awards, monitoring and ensuring the quality of programmes, validating programmes and determining standards.