



# Care Alliance Ireland

*The National Network of Voluntary Organisations for  
Family Carers*

## **2008 Annual Review– Care Alliance Ireland**

### **Chairpersons Statement**

2008 marked a period of significant positive development in the activities of Care Alliance Ireland most noticeably in terms of its resourcing, membership, activities and staffing.

At a governance level, in April 2008 we welcomed Geraldine Clarke (Caring for Carers) and Sally Ann Back (West Cork Carers) onto the board and in June 2008 Frank Goodwin, (Chairperson and founder of the Carers Association). In September, following a smooth transition to incorporation, I was delighted to accept the nomination for Chair, following Jean Days (Heath Training United Care) resignation. Jean played an immensely important role in steering the organisation through three years of development. We currently have a strong and effective board of 11 who bring with them a wide range of skills and experience. Two planning days in Autumn '08 and Spring '09 resulted in the development of a draft Three Year Strategic Plan, which, following recent consultation, will be launched later in 2009.

I would like to thank my fellow board members, and all of the staff team for their professionalism and dedication. I would also like to thank each of our member organisations for their support and feedback and I look forward to meeting more of them in the coming year.

I would also like to thank the Department of Community Rural and Gaelteacht Affairs, and the HSE for their continued financial support.

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Colum Conway  
Chair  
Care Alliance Ireland

### **Report of the Executive Director**

Following the securing of three year funding in early 2008 (2008-2010) from the Department of Community Rural and Gaelteacht affairs, recruitment for the position of an administrator began. Esther Kavanagh began employment in March, and her work has resulted in a significant improvement in the administrative processes of the organisation, particularly in terms of financial reporting, office procedures, supplies, and external communication. The appointment has also freed up the Executive Director to focus on other aspects of the organisations' work. This included board development, governance, strategic development, progression towards incorporation, development of a National Carers Week, membership development, and active involvement in various national representative committees.

*Care Alliance Ireland is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital, registered in Dublin, Ireland, with registered office at :*

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Registered Company No: 461315 CHY No: 14644*

*Directors : G Clarke, C Conway, J Day, Dr. G Fennell, F Goodwin, A Kavanagh, C Keogh, Dr. P Lane, M Lynch, R O'Sullivan, R Webster*

*Patron: Dr. Maeve Hillery*



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One significant piece of work in the year has been the very successful National Carers Week, which we co-ordinated. 13 National and Local Voluntary Organisations joined with us as partners, and over 70 events were held throughout the country during the week (June 9th-16th). Our involvement included the facilitation and leading of planning meetings, financial contributions towards a number of local events for Family Carers, setting up of a website ([www.carersweek.ie](http://www.carersweek.ie)), ordering of and distribution of merchandise including posters, banners, balloons, t-shirts as well as a formal launch. We also co-ordinated the media aspect of the week, and managed the celebrities who supported the week. Following on from Carers Week 2008, the board has agreed for Care Alliance Ireland to continue to take the lead in this project for the coming year (2009) followed by a review thereafter. Formal criteria for partners in Carers Week were drafted in October for consideration with a view to formalising the partnership in early 2009. Avenues for long term funding for this project continue to be explored.

In the first quarter of 2008, we were actively involved with The Carers Association and a dozen other NGO's in developing a joint submission in respect of the development of a National Carers Strategy. We continue to be involved with the Irish Hospice Foundation's committee that are looking at issues around caring and end of life care. Our website has been reviewed and expanded and is now regularly updated. It receives in the region of 20,000 hits per month. Three editions of our Newsletter were produced and distributed in 2008 and an evaluation is planned for Q1 2009.

In both May and July, we facilitated the attendance at Aras an Uachtarain of a large number of Family Carers, following invitations through The Carers Association. This event was hugely meaningful for the Family Carers who attended.

The research function of the organisation received a massive boost with the appointment in August of Ann Stokes, a dedicated Research and Policy Officer. Existing Quantitative research on Family Carers' Health was completed and distributed following extensive peer reviewing. Following an invitation, both Liam and Ann disseminated the main findings of the research at a Combat Poverty Research Seminar in October 2008. In the Autumn of 2008 a new piece of qualitative research was commissioned in collaboration with The Parkinson's Association. Much of Ann's work will be focused on this research though the first half of 2009. Collaboration with other NGO's remains the centrepiece of our philosophy. In this regard the re-establishment of the Family Carers Research Group (FCRG) is evidence of this, with over a dozen participants from both the NGO and Statutory sector. It is planned to invite other organisations working with Family Carers on the FCRG in Q1 2009, thus to broaden membership. In addition, the policy dimension of the organisation has also been strengthened considerably and we now make regular submissions in response to invitations from national/regulatory bodies. We also worked on developing a number of position papers, with completion and distribution planned for Q1 2009. Pre-Budget submissions to the relevant Government Department's were produced in advance of Budget 2009, a presentation was made to the DSFA Pre-Budget Forum, and following the Budget, a detailed Post-Budget Analysis was produced. Since taking up her position, Ann has been requested to make several presentations to relevant organisations/events e.g. Irish Association of Social Worker's Special Interest Group on Ageing. Ann continues to support students with regular enquiries around Family Carer issues. In this regard, we are currently preparing a Family Carers fact sheet/resource in collaboration with other NGO's which will bring efficiencies to this part of our service.

Following a request from Pobal in early 2008, we contributed to the development of evaluation protocols WRT the Pobal Training Fund for Carers and will organise an international seminar to support the various organisations involved in this training delivery in June 2009.

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In October, the Executive Director began his participation in the Stronger Leaders Programme, a Leadership Development programme for senior managers in the Voluntary and Community Sector. Such participation has strengthened the capacity of the organisation to manage its growth and development in a professional manner. Performance appraisal and supervision policies have been developed and implemented to compliment the use of a formal employee handbook. All staff continue to be supported in their development through regular support and supervision, as well as opportunities to take part in relevant courses.

We are planning to host a joint conference in Q1 2009 in partnership with the Neurological Alliance of Ireland. All staff members have been undertaking the relevant preparatory tasks in advance of the event.

We continue to seek other sources of funding for our work to widen our funding base and have had some success in this regard. In December we secured funding from DCRGA in their Scheme of Training Grants, which will be used primarily to support the development of our board.

We continue to work very closely with the 4 HSE regional carer support co-ordinators as well as those NGO's contracted to provide carer support programmes in other areas around the country. For instance, the Research and Policy Officer presented to a Regional Carers' forum in the autumn. Other such presentations are envisaged for 2009.

Internationally, in November we took up a position on the executive of Eurocarers ([www.eurocarers.org](http://www.eurocarers.org)) and engaged with the European Parliament Special Interest Group on Carers throughout the year.

2009 promises to build on the successes of 2008 and we look forward to deepening our relationships with our various stakeholders. The completion of the development of a three year Strategic Plan in early 2009 will give further support to us achieving our mission of ensuring that the role of Family Carers is fully recognised and valued by society in Ireland.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liam O'Sullivan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Liam O'Sullivan  
Executive Director  
Care Alliance Ireland

May 2009

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