Welcome to “Carers Companion” Family Carers Ireland dedicated handbook for Ireland’s family carers across the country. Family carers provide high levels of care in the home to loved ones who are highly dependent including frail older people, people with severe disabilities/chronic illness, the terminally ill and children with special needs.

We hope that this handbook will provide carers with a comprehensive and accessible A to Z of services and supports available to them and will guide them in the right direction, particularly when they first become a family carer, which for many is the most stressful and isolating time.

The last number of years have been difficult for everyone in our society and, in particular, family carers. They have been hit by numerous cuts to their income and services and yet they continue to provide extensive levels of care every day in their homes saving the state an estimated € 10 billion each year. Family carers are the backbone of our health services and must be recognised for their tremendous contribution and roles within our society.

A Special Thank You to Marian Mahon, Carers Supports and Advocacy Manager with Family Carers Ireland for researching and compiling this handbook and to Dormant Accounts for funding this project.

We hope that family carers find this Carers Companion useful and would encourage them to contact our Freephone National Careline 1800 24 07 24 for information, advice or just a friendly ear.

Catherine Cox

Head of Communications and Carer Engagement
Family Carers Ireland
This companion booklet is intended to act as a guide for Family Carers in Ireland.

The definition of being a “Carer” can be very broad and for the purpose of this directory we define Family Carers as those who provide high levels of care to incapacitated persons in their home.

WHO ARE FAMILY CARERS?

Family Carers are usually immediate relatives who provide very high levels of care at home for children and adults with severe disabilities, frail older people and people who are terminally ill.

Carers need to be constantly available due to the high levels of social and health care needed at home, and in case of emergency. The Carer’s life centres on the needs of the person requiring care. Many carers are in poor health arising from the physical, social and emotional effects of providing long-term high-level care, without basic supports.

According to Census 2016 there are 195,263 Carers in Ireland, however the CSO Irish Health Survey released in 2015 found that 10 per cent of population provide care, suggesting a figure closer to 360,000.

This booklet can be downloaded on: www.familycarers.ie
The members of both The Carers Association and Carer for Carers voted by an overwhelming majority at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on the 7th February 2015 to merge both organisations based on the principles outlined in the Merger Agreement.

On 13th January 2016, the new, unified organisation was launched. The formation of Family Carers Ireland represents a very significant and positive milestone for Ireland’s approximately 200,000 family carers.

The Carers Association and Caring for Carers Ireland have come together to form one stronger, dedicated, carer-centred organisation, stronger than the sum of its parts. The merged organisation, Family Carers Ireland, is sustainable and in a better position to support, lobby for and advocate on behalf of Ireland’s family carers.

Both organisations were founded over 25 years ago – Caring for Carers Ireland in County Clare and The Carers Association in Dublin. While they have a lot in common, including being registered charitable companies for family carers; providing supports, services and training; and involvement in research and policy development, there are some differences.

Caring for Carers Ireland has a strong focus on clinical care (i.e., nurse-led care) and also provides an annual respite weekend for family carers. The Carers Association focuses heavily on social care and provides a dedicated National Free Phone Care Line and legal/mediation supports for family carers.

The merger allows for the pooling of best practice and experience to create one stronger, national voice for family carers based on a shared vision for the future. With each organisation offering services and supports in different parts of Ireland, the merger ensures the benefits and services of both organisations are available for family carers across the whole country.

Following discussions with family carers around the country our new name and new logo were developed. Family Carers Ireland has family carers at the heart of all it does, and this is represented both in our new name and in the logo which shows hands cradling a heart. It also symbolises the coming together of the two organisations. Our mission is expressed in the tagline ‘Fairness for Carers’ which speaks to the reality that family carers do not receive sufficient supports to carry out their roles with dignity and in safety. This tagline also indicates that Family Carers Ireland will dedicate itself to campaigning and lobbying to bring greater fairness for family carers.

The merged organisation will continue to provide existing services offered by both Caring for Carers Ireland and The Carers Association and will strive to develop new support based on family carers needs. These include training, support services, home care support, respite weekend breaks, nurse-led clinics, a dedicated helpline for family carers and assistance with legal/mediation services. The new organisation will be “owned” by local carer groups, and looks forward to working with and supporting all family carers across Ireland for many years to come!