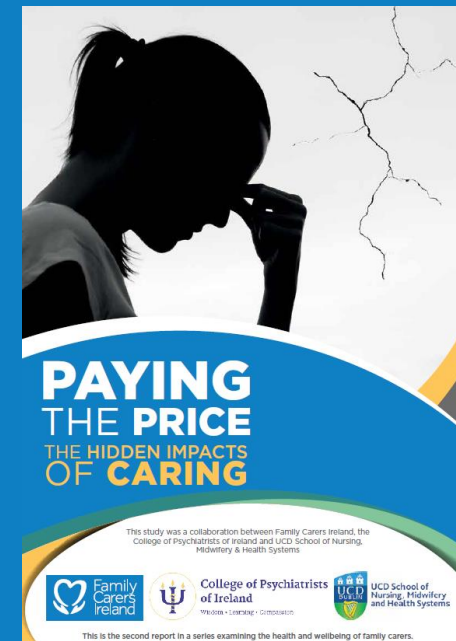
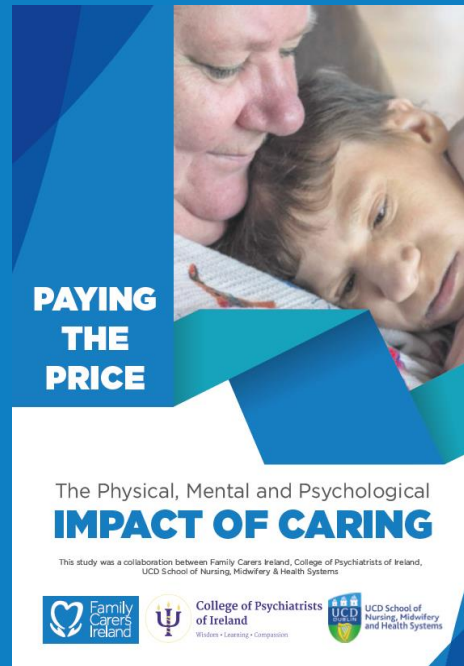


A decade of decline in the health and well-being of family caregivers in Ireland: Implications for General Practice



Dr Nikki Dunne & Dr Kathy McLoughlin
Family Carers Ireland

Background

- ▶ Worldwide, the health and wellbeing of family carers is considerably poorer than that of the general population¹
- ▶ 2009 family carer survey examined family carer health and wellbeing
- ▶ National Carers Strategy (2012)
- ▶ Ten years on, has their health and wellbeing improved?

¹ OECD, 2017; Butterworth et al. 2010; Pinguart, M. and Sørensen, 2003).

Aims

- ▶ Present the self-reported health and well-being of family caregivers in Ireland
- ▶ Examine change in health and well-being over the last 10 years
- ▶ Map existing community-based resources to which GPs and primary care teams can signpost and refer people to
- ▶ Develop an initiative to support GPs to support family carers

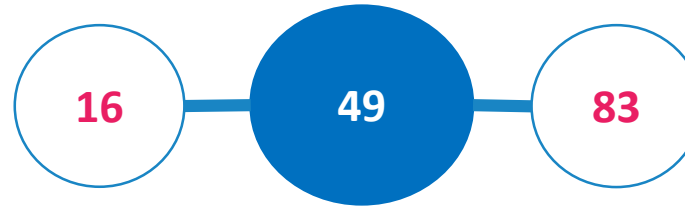
Method

- ▶ Survey of the membership and network reach of Family Carers Ireland
- ▶ Repeat wave of a similar study conducted in 2009
- ▶ Combination of online and postal distribution
- ▶ Achieved sample of 1,102 family carers
 - ▶ All counties in Ireland represented



Our Respondents (n=1102)

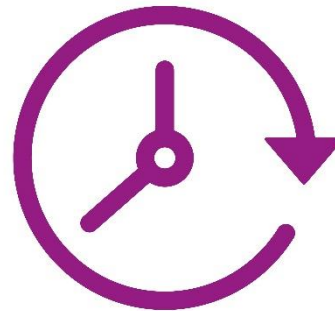
Average Age = 49 years



47% of carers were providing care to a child (under 18)



31% of carers were providing care to an older adult (over 65)



42% of respondents have been caring for 10 years or more

61% of carers are provide 100 hours or more care per week

22% of carers are provide 50-99 hours care per week

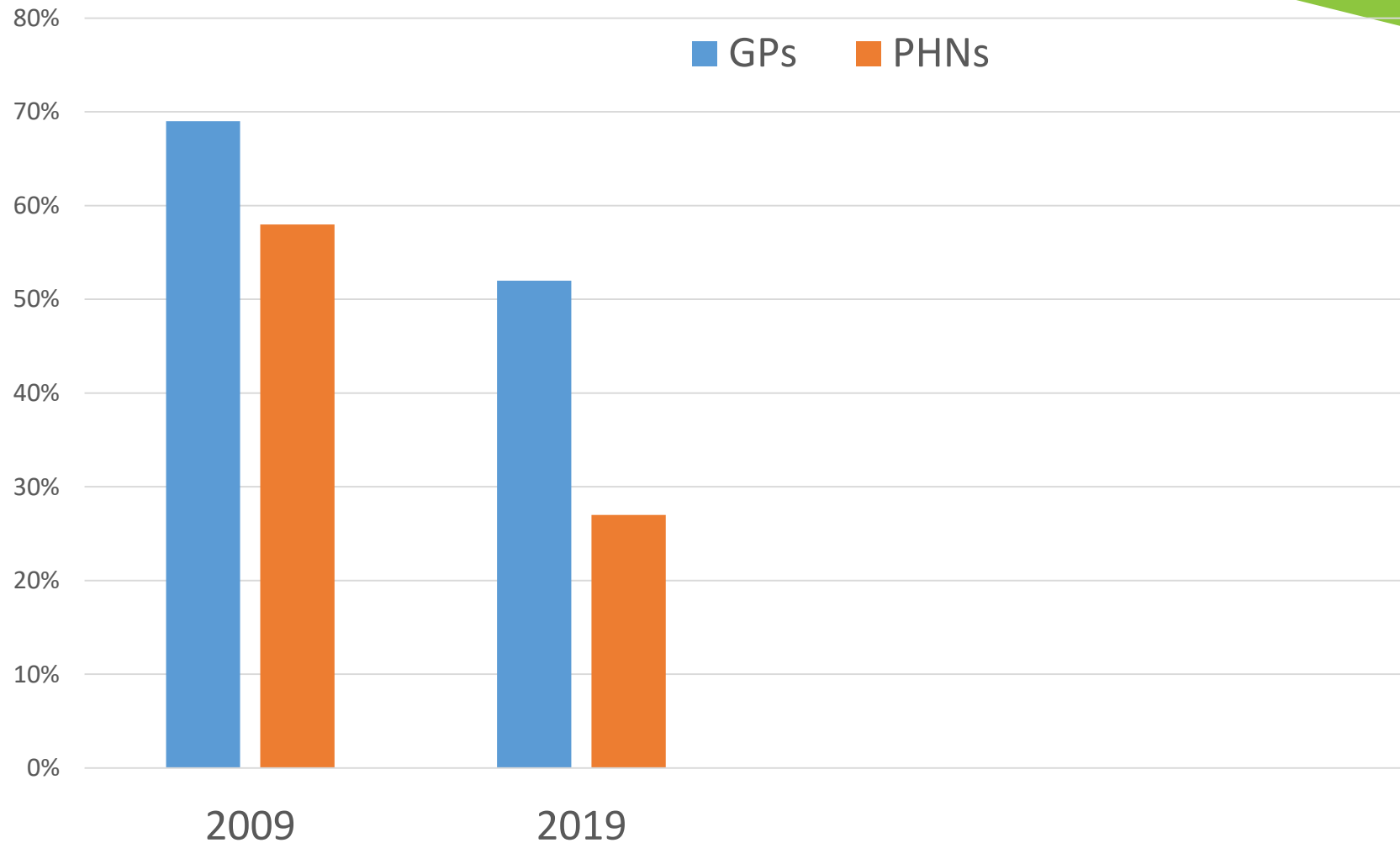
Key findings

- ▶ **48%** of carers have been **diagnosed with mental ill-health**.
- ▶ **67%** of carers suffer with **physical ill-health**.
- ▶ **68%** of carers felt their health had suffered as a **result of caring**.
- ▶ **76%** of carers have **no access to home support**
- ▶ **83%** of carers' loved one have **no access to appropriate respite**.
- ▶ **82%** of carers provide **more than 50 hours** care each week

In the last decade there has been a:

- ▶ **70%** increase in carers diagnosed with **depression**
- ▶ **24%** increase in carers reporting **poor health**
- ▶ **65%** increase in cared-for people who have **no access to respite**

Perceived level of support from GP and PHN



“I go to the GP for my daughter’s health problems but other than that nothing I’m not sure what services or help, if any, is there. I’m isolated a lot with my daughters condition”.

“Managing my own illnesses sometimes gets put on hold as I cannot make my own appointments or GP visits”.

“Anytime I read anything about carers, it’s mainly for helping elderly and physically and mentally disabled. I don’t think there is any help for me”.

Facilitators

- Family caregiver is also patient in the practice
- Established relationship with family caregiver
- Establishing practice protocols to support caregivers

Barriers

- Caregiver characteristics – don't identify, don't ask for help, don't focus on self, cant leave home
- Lack of time and reimbursement – complex needs
- Not knowing what other supports are available

Health and Social Care in the community

REVIEW ARTICLE |  [Free Access](#)

Support for family caregivers: A scoping review of family physician's perspectives on their role in supporting family caregivers

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 SECTIONS

 PDF  TOOLS  SHARE

Recommendations for practice

Direct carers to Family Carers Ireland

- 22 resource centres
- Over 60 support groups
- Engage with 20,000 carers per year



Overview of Supports

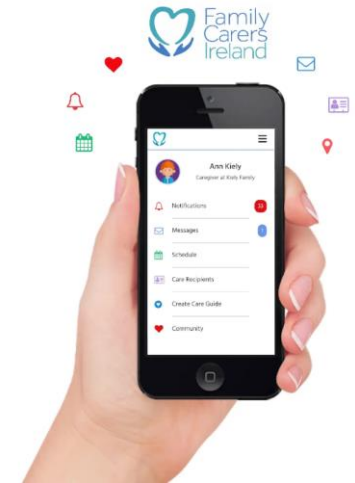
- Information on Rights & Entitlements
- Carer's Allowance Advice
- Carer's Benefit (Carers Leave Act 2001) Advice
- Carer's Support Grant Advice
- Fair Deal Assistance
- Local Training Courses & Workshops
- Private Home Care (Tax Deductible)
- Home Care Packages (HSE Funded) Advice
- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Carer Groups/Peer Support
- Membership
- Senior Alert Scheme/Telecare Support
- Volunteering Programmes
- Respite Weekend Breaks
- Assistive Technology
- Home Respite Service
- Free Private Counselling



Family Carers Ireland also facilitates Carer Groups which are free to attend. Located in over 60 communities across Ireland, these groups allow family carers to:

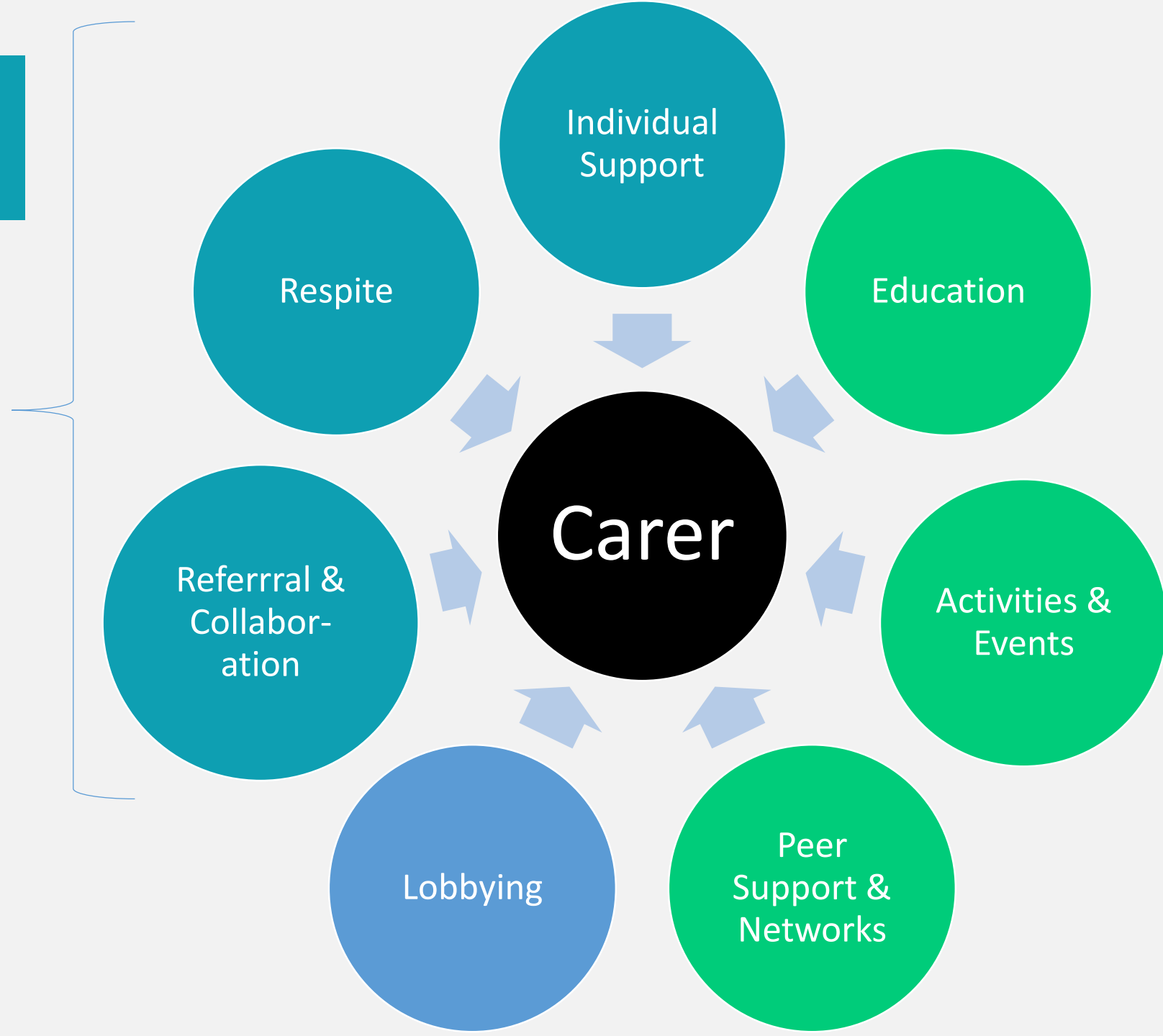
- Share experiences, feelings, ideas, concerns, information and problems
- Access information on Rights & Entitlements
- Act together to highlight local issues with local decision makers
- Have a sense of connection and solidarity with other family carers in similar circumstances
- Take a break from the caring role
- Relax, socialise and learn from other carers
- Receive training and information sessions i.e. Manual Handling, Chair Yoga, Power of Attorney, Dealing with Challenging Behaviour and more

 **FREEPHONE OUR NATIONAL CARELINE**
1800 24 07 24



Individual Supports

- Assessing need and tailoring supports to meet those needs.
- Advocacy
- Respite
- Linking with other services to promote wrap around response to identified need.



Recommendations for future research

- ▶ Barriers and facilitators for GPs supporting carers in Irish context
- ▶ Practical support for carers through social prescribing - What is the effectiveness, cost effectiveness and acceptability of social prescribing for carers? A question asked by NICE (2020)
- ▶ Opportunity for GPs to share their views as part of NUIM CHERISH project

Recommendations for policy

- ▶ Models in UK and Australia
 - Think Patient, Think Carer
 - RCGP approach
- Clear policies with funding attached that direct GPs to assess and support caregivers
- Family carers assessed as part of the homecare assessment

Conclusions

- ▶ Despite publication of the national carers strategy in 2012, the health and wellbeing of family carers has declined
- ▶ Carers feel less supported by their GP and PHN than they did 10 years ago
- ▶ General practice is considered to be a suitable setting to support family carers
- ▶ Time, human resources and lack of knowledge regarding available supports are barriers to supporting carers
- ▶ Family Carers Ireland can help you immediately
- ▶ A national initiative is at planning phase and we urge you to get involved

Call to action!

- ▶ If you're a GP and would like to get involved planning our national project to support GPs to support family carers please contact Kathy McLoughlin kmcloughlin@familycarers.ie



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Call to action!

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