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Respondent

9

Anonymous

05:40

Time to complete

The Supporting Statement

To submit your entry for the Charity Excellence Awards, please download the entry form provided above. Fill it in with your response, ensuring that your supporting statement does not exceed 1000 words.

Then copy and paste the completed statement back here into this form in two parts as per the instructions below.

If you have any issue with the above please send the completed entry form directly to awards@charitiesinstituteireland.ie with the category in the subject line.

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Please complete your supporting statement here (up to 1000 words).

If copying and pasting your draft here then please split in two parts as the form will only take 550 words per answer.

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"I'd like to tell you about the charity that stood beside me for the past four years and often held me up when I felt I couldn't possibly cope for one more day". These are the words of Mum and family carer Brenda-O'Connell Barry who cared for her beautiful little boy Fionn for his 7 short years and reflects her appreciation of the supports she received from national charity, Family Carers Ireland (FCI).

Caring for a loved one can be rewarding, but it can also be difficult, frightening and isolating. It shouldn't be. That is why we exist. Family Carers Ireland want carers to know they have the support they need to care safely, to make it less of a battle and to know they are not alone. We are the national charity supporting the 500,000+ family and young carers across the country who care for loved ones such as children or adults with additional needs, physical or intellectual disabilities, frail older people, those with palliative care needs or those living with chronic illnesses, mental health challenges or addiction.

Our vision is an Ireland in which family carers and young carers are properly recognised, supported and empowered – our mission is to highlight the contribution of family carers to Irish society and to improve the lives of family carers throughout the country. We believe that no one should have to care alone.

Our passion is to raise the awareness of family carers in Ireland, who save the State €20bn annually, and where, by 2030, 1 in 5 will be in a family caring role. Societal and governmental recognition of this hidden workforce is vital to the future sustainability of "care at home" in Ireland. We direct and inform carer policy as well as conducting critical research resulting in positive change.

We are committed to achieving high standards of governance adopting the Charity Regulatory Authority (CRA) Charities Governance Code. We have also achieved the CII 'Triple Lock Standard' for 7 years now, as well as abiding by a transparent donor charter.

As a charity, the Executive and Senior Management teams collectively develop 5 year strategic plans delivering on 8 key result areas that encompass: improving carers' lives; carers contribution and sustainable growth. To reach these core objectives, we forensically review key change drivers both current and anticipated which include but are not limited to demographics, health and social care practice, public management and regulatory context.

Through a national network of Carer Support Centres and a Freephone Careline, we provide essential (free) supports and services including information and advocacy on rights and entitlements, advice on care planning and crisis support, counselling, peer networking groups, learning and education, young carer support and help in accessing essential respite/emergency respite. In terms of meaningful impact our Emergency respite scheme is a perfect example having allowed carers experiencing severe burnout the chance to recover and continue their caring role whilst providing vital support to carers in very difficult situations including end-of-life and palliative care with 20,550 hours delivered in 2022.

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Supporting Statement (Part 2). Additional space if required.

Some of our notable achievements are: Census 2022 Q23, Is this Me? TV and social media campaign (53% increase in people identifying as family carers); 85,000 unique carer engagements; supported 5,339 new carers; 20,550 hours of emergency respite delivered; 92 family carers successfully completing our Working Care Out programme (aims to guide carers (incl. former) back into work and education); 400 young carers (10-18yrs) were supported through events/outings/counselling/sibling workshops; 4368 hours of counselling delivered to 466 family carers; collaborated with SETU to provide Level 6 training courses covering Caring with Confidence, Parents Plus Special Needs, Last Aid, Advocacy, Learning to Learn at 3rd Level and Safety Intervention, with 329 successfully taking part; Careline achieved accreditation from the Helplines Partnership, taking 4793 calls in 2022 (+19% on '21); Lobbied and succeed in the introduction of increased income/capital disregards for Carer's Allowance (1st increase in 13 years); Announcement by Minister for Social Protection that long term carers caring 20 years or more will now have their caring years recognised as contributions towards the State Pension (Contributory, from Jan 24); Expansion of Fuel Allowance scheme with additional 80k households eligible for payment, including higher disregards for over 70s and the disregarding of Half-Rate Carer's Allowance for all applicants; aired our new "Who Cares?" TV self-identification campaign; 10,000 members availing of discounts and offers/FCI identity card.

Self-identification remains a key challenge, with most carers not recognising their own caring roles beyond the relationship they have with the cared for person – Mum, Dad, sibling, grandparent etc. We continue to educate and shine a light on family caring through our social media community (40,640 total), membership, extensive public relations planning/execution, tv advertising; Carer of the Year Awards, fundraising, community events, our caring employers programme, corporate partnerships and through our network of 17 Community and Intensive Support Managers. Obstacles faced also include being primarily funded by HSE older persons budgets, making it difficult to provide supports and services to carers of adults and children with disabilities. We overcome such a challenge by fundraising for unrestricted funds, through the fostering of relationships with donors, both public and corporate, growing our volunteer base to assist in fundraising. We also lobbied Government and successfully secured funding of €1.9M in 2022 under the Carer's Guarantee to provide key supports and services nationally. This has included growing to a team of 121 staff, all dedicated to delivering the best possible offering to empower and improve the lives of Ireland's 500,000+ family and young carers. Family carers like Brenda – "I was drowning, I truly was. Family Carers Ireland rescued me and my little family and I will be forever grateful".