



Care Alliance Ireland – Supporting a YesYes Vote¹ for the 2024 Gender and Care Referendums

Care Alliance Ireland are supporting YesYes Vote in the upcoming 2024 referendums on the topics of the definition of 'family' and of care. The purpose of this short document is to outline why.

On March 8th, 2024, the people of Ireland will be asked to cast their vote in 2 related referendums; one which proposes to redefine the 'family' as not solely dependent on marriage, and the second to widen the concept of care beyond that of a mother caring for her children, and to remove the so-called 'women in the home' Article of the Constitution.

In early 2020, Care Alliance Ireland were invited to speak with Catherine Day, Chair of the Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality, ahead of the commencement of the Assembly. This was specifically regarding issues regarding care and gender equality. Zoe Hughes, our Senior Policy & Research Officer was subsequently invited to speak to the members of the Assembly on the topic and did so in 2021. Over the next four years, we have made multiple submissions to Government on the topic, including to the Citizens Assembly and Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality. In these submissions we have reiterated our support for these changes, most particularly for the widening of the concept of care in our Constitution to also include family care, and care undertaken by men and non-binary individuals.

All of these submissions, and our presentation to the Citizens Assembly, are available to read on our website: <https://www.carealliance.ie/Referendums2024>.

¹ <https://www.yesyes.ie/>

We were disappointed, like many in our sector, that the final wording of the proposed amendments chosen by Government did not reflect in full the recommendations made by the Citizen Assembly, nor by many organisations across the sector. In particular we were disappointed that;

- 1) The concept of care, in this amendment, is still restricted to family, rather than encompassing care across society and in the community
- 2) That Government will 'strive' to support care, rather than be required or expected to take reasonable measures to do so

That notwithstanding, we have decided as an organisation to support these proposals for a number of key reasons.

- 1) As detailed in our organisational Vision & Mission², we specifically work towards a position whereby 'the role of family carers is fully recognised and valued by society in Ireland'. We believe that having the proposed recognition of family care within the Constitution brings us closer to the fulfilment of this core aspect of our work.
- 2) Recognition of family care in the Constitution will enable us in our work to continue to advocate for policy and service changes and developments that improve the lives of Ireland's 500,000 family carers. Being able to refer policy makers to the foundational policy document of the State (i.e. the Constitution) builds stronger arguments for improved services and supports for family carers, regardless of their gender or who they are caring for.
- 3) Currently, men are not recognised for their care contributions at all in the Constitution. The last Census of population in 2022 showed that 40% of family carers in Ireland are male. By removing gendered language, as it refers to care, from the Constitution, we send a strong message to those men who provide increasingly significant levels of care every day that that work is valued by us all.
- 4) We believe that 'family' comes in many forms; we have, for many years, been using the term 'family care' to refer to all care which involves care outside of the formal care system. This has always, for us, included non-marital families, families of choice, and others. Ensuring these families are recognised within the Constitution is important for the message it sends about inclusion and equality.

² See <https://www.carealliance.ie/vision-and-mission>

‘Guiding support for family carers’

Although we are a membership organisation, we do not speak for all our members on this issue. Many of the not-for-profit groups which make up our membership³ are in support of these proposals, however not all necessarily will be. Each of our member organisations will make their own information available to those they work with.

As part of our role in disseminating information, we have created two online resources which may be helpful.

The first, a page on our website, houses links to all the work we have done on this issue to date. This includes all submissions made to the Citizens Assembly and Joint Oireachtas Committee of gender Equality, along with links to other organisations we have collaborated with on the issue.

<https://www.carealliance.ie/Referendums2024>

The second, a part of our broader Policy & Research Repository⁴, collates media and related articles from across the web. This includes material which is from trustworthy and verified sources, regardless of whether it advocates for a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ vote.

<https://bit.ly/CAIRefs2024>

We urge all of those eligible to vote in these referendums to check if they are registered⁵ and to make a plan to vote on Friday 8th March, to show family carers in Ireland that they are seen, they are important, and that they are supported.

³ <https://www.carealliance.ie/List-of-members>

⁴ <https://wakelet.com/@careallianceireland>

⁵ <https://www.checktheregister.ie/en-IE/>