

QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

Below we list a range of questions regarding carers' leave that we would like you to consider.

1.1 Details of respondents

Are you replying?

	On behalf of an organisation
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Please specify your full name (optional) and country of residence

Liam O'Sullivan, Ireland

If you are replying on behalf of an organisation, please provide the full name of your organisation:

Care Alliance Ireland, Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7, Ireland
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What type of organisation is it?

Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	

If 'Other', please specify. Any details of individual academic experts can be included here.

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1.2 Existing carers' leave measures

Questions 1: How would you describe the costs of providing carers' leave in your country, referring to *direct costs* to the government and/or employers associated with compensation payments, *indirect costs* from productivity losses and *administrative costs* (on-off and recurring costs associated with, for example, processing, record-keeping and/or reporting of leave claims)? Please provide any data or evidence to support your view where possible.

Background -

Ireland's carers can receive upto 2 years carers benefit, with a payment of €205 per week (Sept 2011) as compensation paid to the family carer by the state. See <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Schemes/IllnessDisabilityAndCaring/Carers/CarersBenefit/Pages/carb.aspx>

- The direct costs to the employer we believe to be minimal, although we acknowledge the possible costs of training up a replacement worker, administration costs and the requirement to keep the position open for a period of up to two years. However, it is reasonable to assume that the age***

profile of those who take up Carers Benefit is higher than the median age of the working population, as 57% of family/informal carers in Ireland are aged 45 and older. (See http://www.cso.ie/census/census2006results/volume_11/Volume11_2006.pdf) Therefore there could potentially be savings associated with taking on a 'cheaper/younger employees' for the duration of the employee being on carers benefit.

- *The direct costs to the state are made up of the compensation payment €205 per week, however it is likely that this cost is more than offset by the saving accrued due to the availability of the family carer to provide care for a dependent relative/person who would otherwise require expensive home care support and or residential care. Should the family carer not make themselves available, then the cost of providing more formal care provision is likely to be a multiple cost (1 hour of home care costs in the region of €20 per hour.) Our recent research indicates that the average full time carer (as those being eligible for Carer Benefit need to be providing care on a full time basis, we use the 42 hours or more as the cut off) is spending 110 hours per week caring. (See <http://www.carealliance.ie/publications> Pilot Carers Question Analysis) A rough calculation €205/110 suggests an average hourly rate of €1.86, a small fraction of the cost of formal home/residential care.*

Question 2: What are in your view the main benefits of providing carers' leave in your country? Examples of benefits can refer to improved well-being for carer, improved health for care recipient, greater independence for the carer, security of employee's job and income, gender equality, economic benefits (whether to the carer or more widely) etc.

Benefits include the following;

- **A guaranteed income, albeit lower than a wage, for a period of up to 2 years**
- **Enabling a worker to engage in full-time caring in the knowledge that their position will be secure for a period of 2 years. This is likely to allow for less resentment on the carers behalf, and higher quality care provision**
- **Facilitate a higher availability of informal care, with resultant savings in the areas of formal care provision, as alluded to in Q1. The vast majority of dependent people and in particular older dependent people report preferring to stay at home as long as is possible, and family carers enable this to happen. Institutional care is associated with early mortality and accelerated higher dependencies.**
- **Sends a strong message about the value placed on family care, with positive impacts on status, image, and self-perception of family carers, with potential for positive impact on carer wellbeing**

Question 3: What impact has carers' leave had on gender equality in your country? Please refer to gender equality aspects such as female employment rate, share of part-time workers in total female and male employment, gender pay gap, occupational and vertical segregation and gender pay gap. Whenever possible, please specify the type of impact (for

instance, “positive”, “negative”) and the magnitude of the impact (“major impact”, “significant impact”, “slight impact” or “negligible impact”).

- **Not sure, but probably negligible/slight positive impact, as we understand that the majority of the take up in Ireland is from female employees.**

Please provide any data or evidence to support your view where possible.

Question 4: What is, in your view, the added value of carers’ leave, compared to other forms of family-related leave (parental leave, leave for urgent family reasons etc.)?

- **Family caring is different to parenting as there is little choice in caring as opposed to parenting – that is most parents choose to become parents and have much control over this choice – whereas family carers do not.**
- **More inclusive to now allow for significant time to care for a parent, sibling, uncle/aunt etc.**
- **Force majeure is generally for very short periods of time. Most caring is medium to long term – with chronic rather than acute care required.**

Question 5: Which measures have been the most successful in encouraging men to take up carers’ leave ? Why? Please provide any data or evidence to support your view where possible.

- **We are not aware of any measures in Ireland in this matter other than the actual introduction of carers leave/benefit, but would welcome same both nationally and at an EU level.**

1.3 Possible EU initiative on carers’ leave

Question 1: Do you see a need for an EU initiative on carers’ leave and, if yes, what kind of initiative (legislative, non-legislative) would generate the greatest EU added value? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of such an initiative?

- **Absolutely – by way of legislation. Only binding legislation would make it happen.**

Question 2: If you support legislative options in the section above, which do you think would achieve the best balance between costs and benefits?

- **The Irish legislation, that is up to 2 years leave with the payment set at a level of most other welfare payments, seems to strike a fair balance – though with such different social insurance models in operation across the EU, some flexibility may also be appropriate.**

Question 3: What would be the added value of an EU initiative on carers' leave, compared to existing measures or possible future initiatives at Member State level?

- **The EU needs to show leadership in this matter. Most significant reforms in social legislation, at least in an Irish context, have been initiated at EU level.**
- **Any initiative in this area would not create significant costs to the market economy.**

Question 4: What would be, in your view, the likely costs of a legislative initiative introducing an entitlement to carers' leave up to 3 months at EU level?

- **Difficult to quantify, as it depends on how the costs are shared, but as pointed out earlier, the direct costs are likely to be more than offset by savings in the provision of formal care provision, and specifically less costs associated with managing emergency/urgent dependency situations as they arise.**

Question 5: What would be, in your view, the likely benefits of a legislative initiative introducing an entitlement to carers' leave up to 3 months at EU level? Examples of benefits can refer to improved well-being for carer, improved health for care recipient, security of employee's job and income, retention of carer in the labour market/workforce etc.

As indicated in response to Q 2 in section 2.2 – repeated here again.

- **A guaranteed income, albeit perhaps at a rate lower than a wage, for a period of 3 months**
- **Enabling a worker to engage in full-time caring in the knowledge that their position will be secure for a period. This is likely to allow for less resentment on the carers behalf, and may lead to higher quality care provision**
- **Facilitate a higher availability of informal care, with resultant savings in the areas of formal care provision, as alluded to in Q1. The vast majority of dependent people and in particular older dependent people report preferring to stay at home as long as is possible, and family carers enable this to happen. Institutional care is associated with early mortality and accelerated higher dependencies.**
- **Sends a strong message about the value placed on family care, with positive impacts on status, image, and self-perception of family carers, with potential for positive impact on carer wellbeing**

Question 6: What impact would such potential EU measure on carers' leave have on gender equality in your country? Please refer to gender equality aspects such as female employment rate, share of part-time workers in total female and male employment, gender pay gap, occupational and vertical segregation and gender pay gap. Whenever possible, please specify the type of impact (for instance, "positive", "negative") and the magnitude of the impact ("major impact", "significant impact", "slight impact" or "negligible impact").

- **Not likely to be significant – perhaps a slight positive impact.**

2 ANY OTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTED REFERENCES

We would welcome any other comments you may have about existing and possible measures on carers' leave. You can either enter your comments here or attach any relevant documents (academic articles, impact assessment, survey results) to your reply email.

- **Carers leave legislation has been in effect in Ireland since 2001. Whilst the take up of this leave has been increasing incrementally up to 2008 and subsequently reducing by 27% since then, the number of carers who took this leave never amounted to more than 2,249 at any one time, (See <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/ResearchSurveysAndStatistics/Documents/2010stats.pdf> p10) or less than 0.1% of the labour force.(circa 2million over the period) In addition, it would appear that the average period of leave taken is less than 6 months, in spite of legislation allowing for up to 2 years leave. See <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/ResearchSurveysAndStatistics/Documents/2010stats.pdf> (p10,14; 2010 Figures. Weekly recipients/Total Number of Beneficiaries 1,642/3,631 = .444 years) In this regard, any concerns about the magnitude of any (perceived) costs at the macro level of the economy are unlikely to be well founded in the event of similar legislation be introduced in other EU countries.**
- **As Ireland has some experience of the introduction of and implementation of quite progressive legislation in this area, we would be delighted to be available to support any EU institutions on any initiatives that may arise in the future.**
- **One small piece of research that may be useful may be a survey of a sample of current recipients of the carers benefit here in Ireland – to answer some questions around – take up, gender issues, specific cost benefit analysis etc.**