

Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

Personal experience panel – January 2021

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Carers often find themselves in the Caring role due to circumstances outside their control and may not even see themselves as Carers rather just as Mams or Dads, husbands or wives, children or relatives just looking after their loved ones.

Sometimes these episodes of Caring are for very short periods of time, e.g. for short bouts of illness.

At other times they involve long periods of time, months or years and may involve looking after others with life changing situations, e.g, dementia or severe intellectual or physical disability from birth. Some parents see this as what they have to do because it's their child or parent etc.

What is not taken into account is the economic cost of doing this. Parents may not be able to work full time or may have to drop hours worked in paid employment. They may not qualify for or be entitled to Carers Allowance or Benefit because of Means Testing.

A definite recommendation would be that all Carers are assessed for Carers Payment in some form or other so that they are not penalised and forced to live in Penury because of their Caring Role. Credit should be given towards a pension or payment and it would help greatly if access to that was easier.

In looking after children/young adults with severe and enduring physical or intellectual needs, consideration should be given to a proper transition from Children's to Adult Services. Once the magic age of 18 is reached and the child is technically an adult, it seems the continuity of care is gone and waiting lists/referrals start all over again.

This impacts all carers, whether male or female.

The burden of Caring often falls on the shoulders of women, however they should not be punished for that by being economically dependent on others. Both men and women contribute a huge amount to society in their Caring roles and the values they bring to it. Their own needs, physically and intellectually, should not be neglected or ignored. How can we make sure their needs are met?