



Online Family Carer Support Project

Presentation by
Tara O'Connor

Project Coordinator
Care Alliance Ireland



Funded by the HSE

10th September 2024

Origin of the Project



- March 2020: COVID-19
- Services all ceased – many overnight
- Time of confusion and misinformation
- Care Alliance responded

The Online Family Carer Support Project

Aims

- Reliable, trustworthy information
- Facilitate peer support between family carers
- Signpost to services & other organisations





Main Objectives



- Increase the overall well-being of family carers in Ireland
- Reduce the negative impacts often experienced, such as loneliness and social isolation

Facebook



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook group page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for home, group, video, events, and profile. The main header area features a large purple and blue graphic with a central circular logo that reads "ONLINE FAMILY CARER SUPPORT GROUP IRELAND" and "SUPPORTED BY CARE ALLIANCE IRELAND". To the left of the logo is the Care Alliance Ireland logo and a text box stating "This group is run by Care Alliance Ireland." To the right is another text box with the "Registered Charity Number 200483" and an "Edit" button. Below the header is a blue banner that says "Group by National Carers Week". The group title is "Family Carer Support Group (Republic of Ireland)" with a lock icon and "Private group · 8.5K members". There are "+ Invite" and "Share" buttons. Below the title are tabs for "Discussion", "Featured", "Members", "Events", "Media", and "Files". At the bottom, there is a text input field with a placeholder "Write something..." and an "About" button.



Why Facebook?




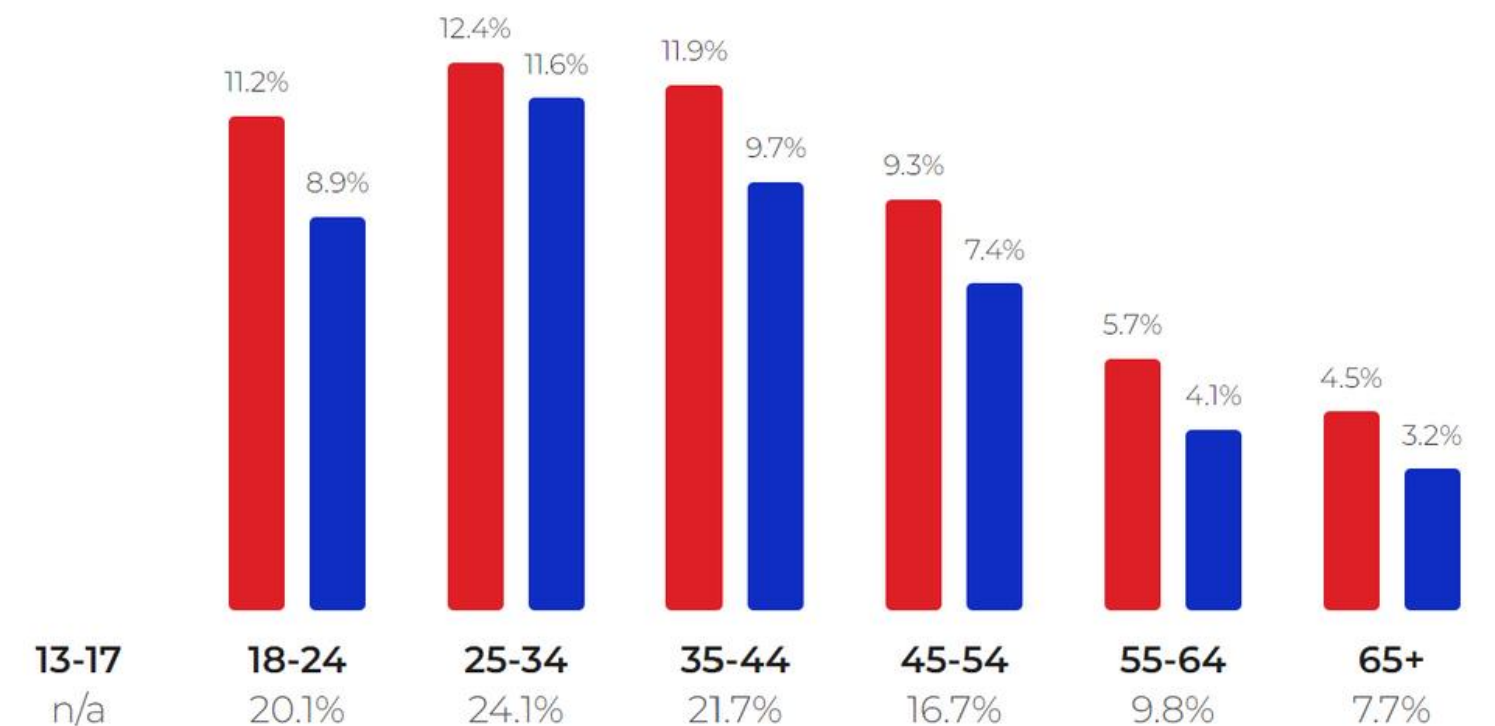
- Set up speed and cost
- Go where the carers already are

Not just a “Facebook group”
A professionally moderated, funded support group that happens to use the Facebook platform

 Facebook users in Ireland
June 2024 

 4 063 400

 55.1%
women  44.9%
men



Source: NapoleonCat.com

Operations



**Peer
Support &
Advice**

- Members
- Volunteers (former & current family carers)

**Professional
Guidance &
Referrals**

- Social Workers
- Policy & Research
- Psychologists
- Wellness

Activities

- Book Club
- Gardening Club
- Quiz Nights
- Coffee morning
- Educational Talks
- Competitions



Volunteer Moderators



- Team of 11 volunteers
- Mix of current/former family carers and professionals
- All posts are pre-moderated, all comments read
- 7-day week rota
- Assist with the various activities we offer



“Mods & Vols” Group



- Discuss challenging issues
- Appropriate responses
- Resources
- Monthly Zoom meetings
- Volunteer Support

OFCSG Ireland

Mods & Vols

FC Support Group Moderators and volunteers

Private group · 15 members

[+ Invite](#) [Share](#)

[Discussion](#) [Featured](#) [Members](#) [Events](#) [Media](#) [Files](#)

Activities: All Online

Book Club



Coffee Morning



Quiz Nights



Crafty Carers



Competitions & Giveaways



Gardening Club



Information & Educational Talks





Zoom Quiz Nights



- Monthly Quiz Night
- Themed Topics
- Light-hearted, fun!



Book Club

- Takes place every 3 months
- Approx 80 books sent to family carers around the country
- Irish book supplier
- Zoom Book Club discussion night



"Just been to my first Book Club Zoom and it was WONDERFUL 😊 I have never been in a Book Club before and really enjoyed discussing the book and getting other suggestions for reading, chatting about lots of other stuff too! can't wait for the next one 💕"



Garden Club



"Just want to say a HUGE thank you to the team who set up and ran this group. It has brightened many a dark day, the advice, the banter, the humour, the support, the connection etc have all been wonderful. So thanks for that and thanks also for the amazing little gifts and surprises along the way. Was so excited this morning to open the door to a package for me and not my son for a change. Gonna plant it up and look forward to the brighter days and beautiful blooms to come. . 🇪🇺 ❤️"



"Thank you so much for this beautiful kind gift made my day 🌸 🍁 🍂"

"Was truly one of the nicest surprises I've ever received by post. I never get parcels! Thanks so much ❤️ 🌸 🍁 🍂"

Online Art Classes



 **Online Family Carer Support Group** 

ACRYLIC PAINTING CLASSES

Eight week painting classes delivered via Zoom.
Suitable for complete beginners - Intermediate.
All painting materials supplied for new members.

- Week 1 Tuesday 13th August
- Week 2 Tuesday 20th August
- Week 3 Tuesday 27th August
- Week 4 Tuesday 3rd Sept
- Week 5 Tuesday 10th Sept
- Week 6 Tuesday 17th Sept
- Week 7 Tuesday 24th Sept
- Week 8 Tuesday 1st October

ALL CLASSES WILL BEGIN AT 8PM

"I truly enjoyed every minute it felt like my time even though I could still be home where I was needed"

"There hasn't been an art class that I didn't like and I hate when I have to miss them. They are very enjoyable and relaxing. I love the banter and also the fact that if I'm not up to it I don't have to engage."

"Totally enjoyed the classes. The content and the delivery were exceptional. It was a social outlet as much as a learning experience, please can we do it again?"

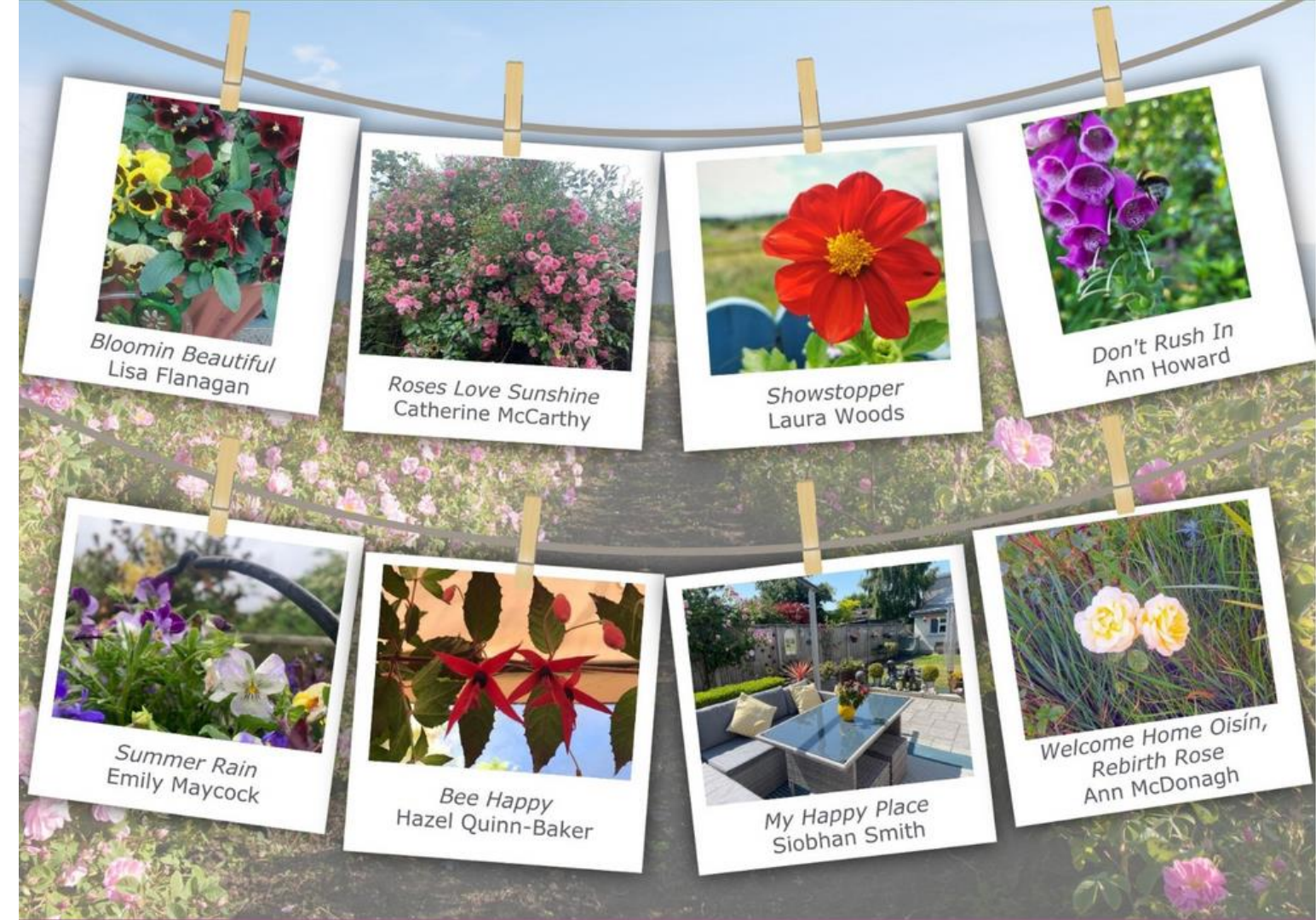


Calendar 2024



"Absolutely amazing, gorgeous meaningful calendar. Thank you."

"We are so delighted to have received one, my mam had the biggest smile on her face looking at all the beautiful photos."



*Bloomin Beautiful
Lisa Flanagan*

*Roses Love Sunshine
Catherine McCarthy*

*Showstopper
Laura Woods*

*Don't Rush In
Ann Howard*

*Summer Rain
Emily Maycock*

*Bee Happy
Hazel Quinn-Baker*

*My Happy Place
Siobhan Smith*

*Welcome Home Oisín,
Rebirth Rose
Ann McDonagh*

September

MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

It doesn't matter if it rains or shines; with a positive attitude every day can be happy. - Bernadette





Quotes From Members



"The only place outside of my household where I feel that I really belong. The only place I go actually. I don't have to give any back story or talk about anything. I can just be, there is no demand at all on me and it is a safe haven. Invaluable. "

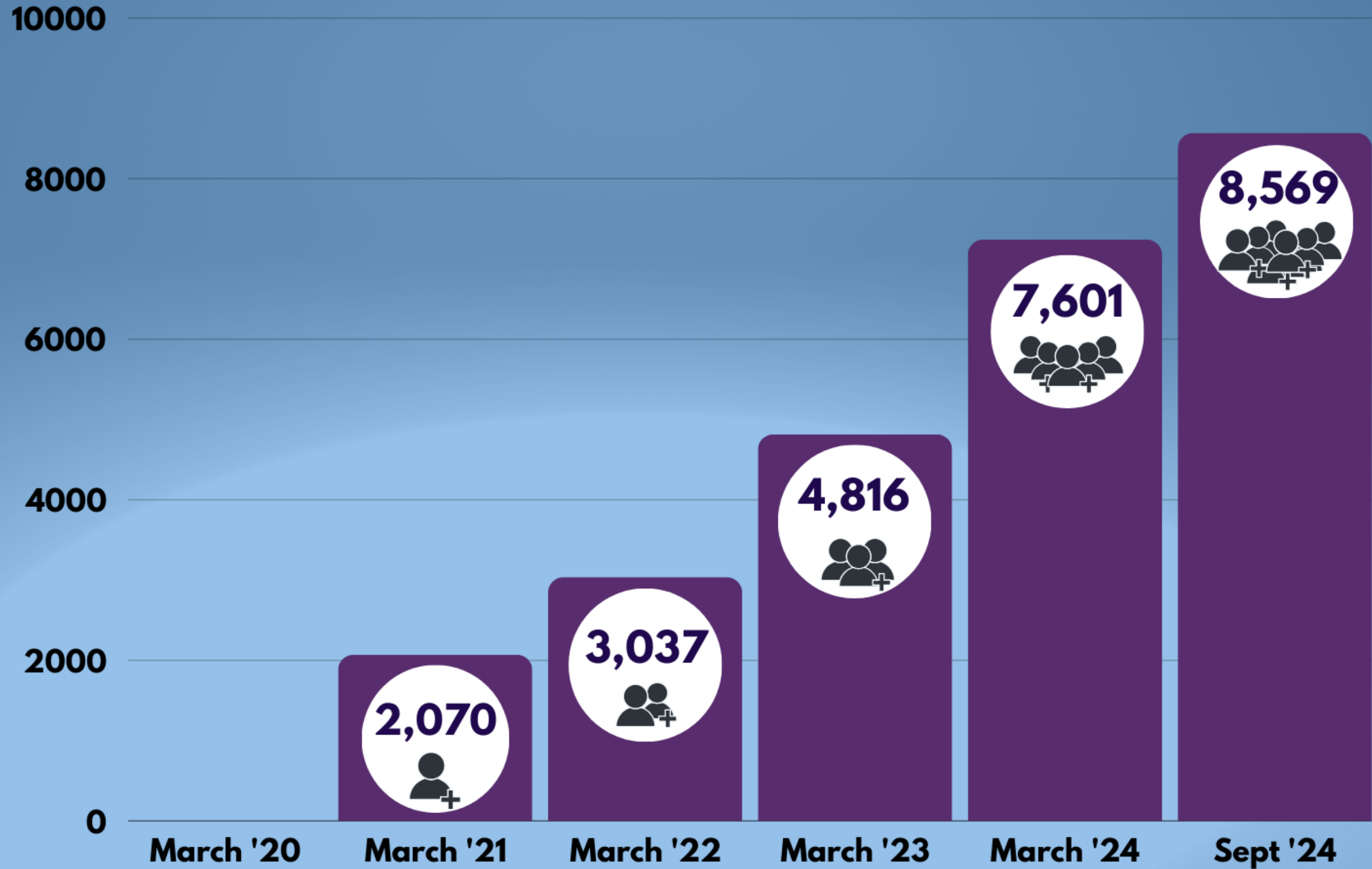
"Bravo to the staff, & all the volunteers what an amazing group ye have created & what a wonderful support, comfort & safe place it is for all & any of us. Knowing it's here, is huge, no matter how alone or physically isolated you are in your caring role, here there is always a kind word, sage advice & camaraderie, such a gift ..."

"I would just like to say Thank You 💜 as since I have found you, I have had a beautiful experience in speaking with the kindest and caring people, people who know and understand like myself the work anxiety stress and sometimes heartbreak that being a family carer can be. Thank you so much 💜"



MEMBERSHIP OF THE ONLINE FAMILY CARER SUPPORT GROUP OVER TIME

Number of Members



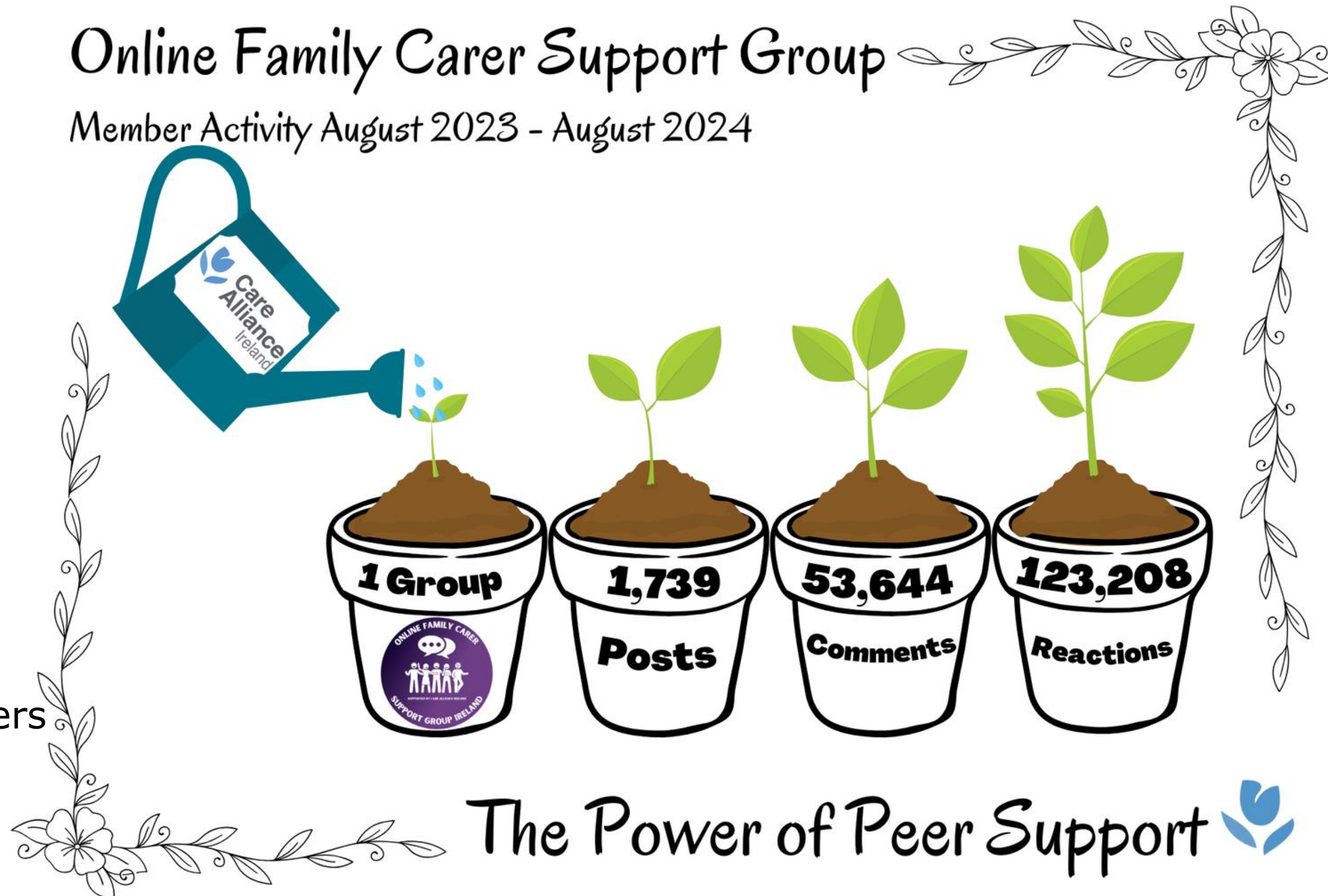
Membership

Engagement

Online Family Carer Support Group

Member Activity August 2023 - August 2024

- Currently 8,583 members
- Membership continues to increase at a rate of 4 new members per day
- Retention rate of 97% versus traditional face-to-face, where drop out rate can be as high as 50%
- Extremely high engagement levels – approx. 90% of members are “active”

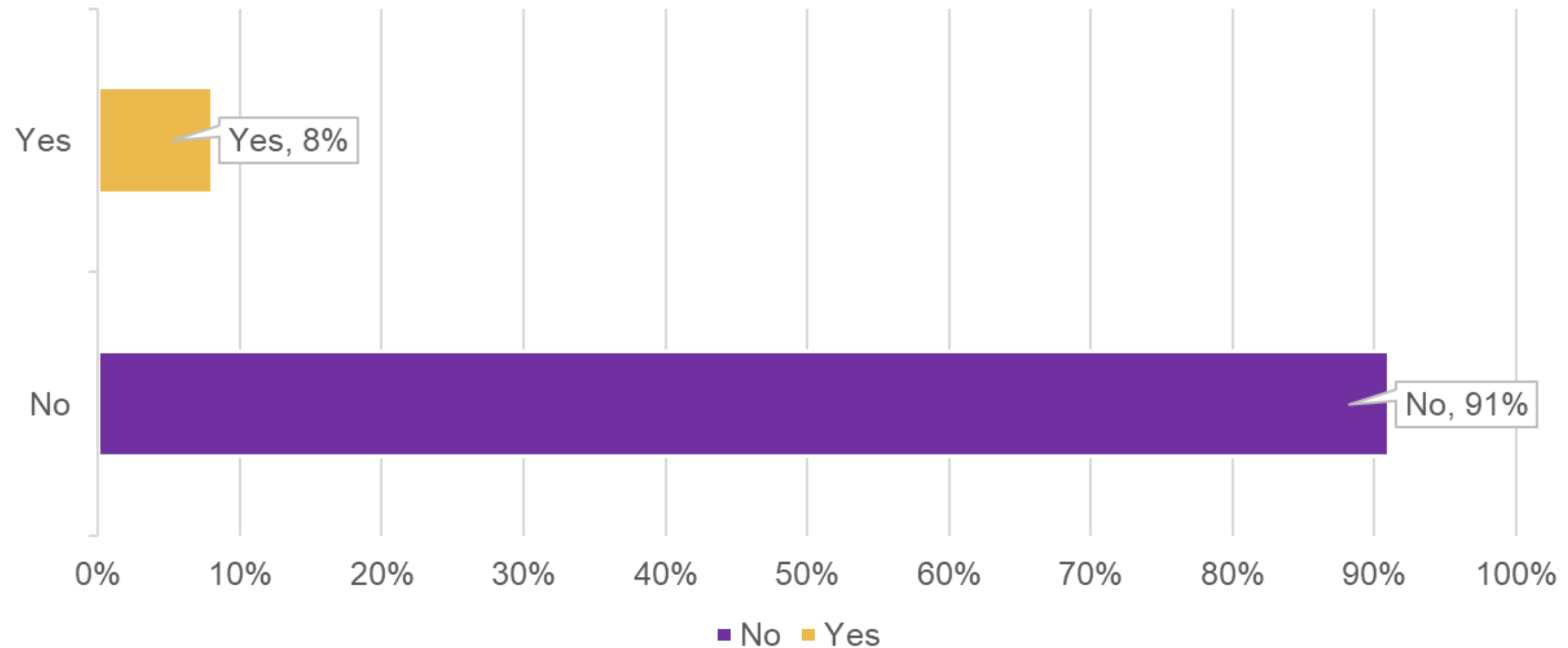


The Power of Peer Support 



Member Poll

We asked: "Prior to Covid-19 were you involved in any face to face support groups?"

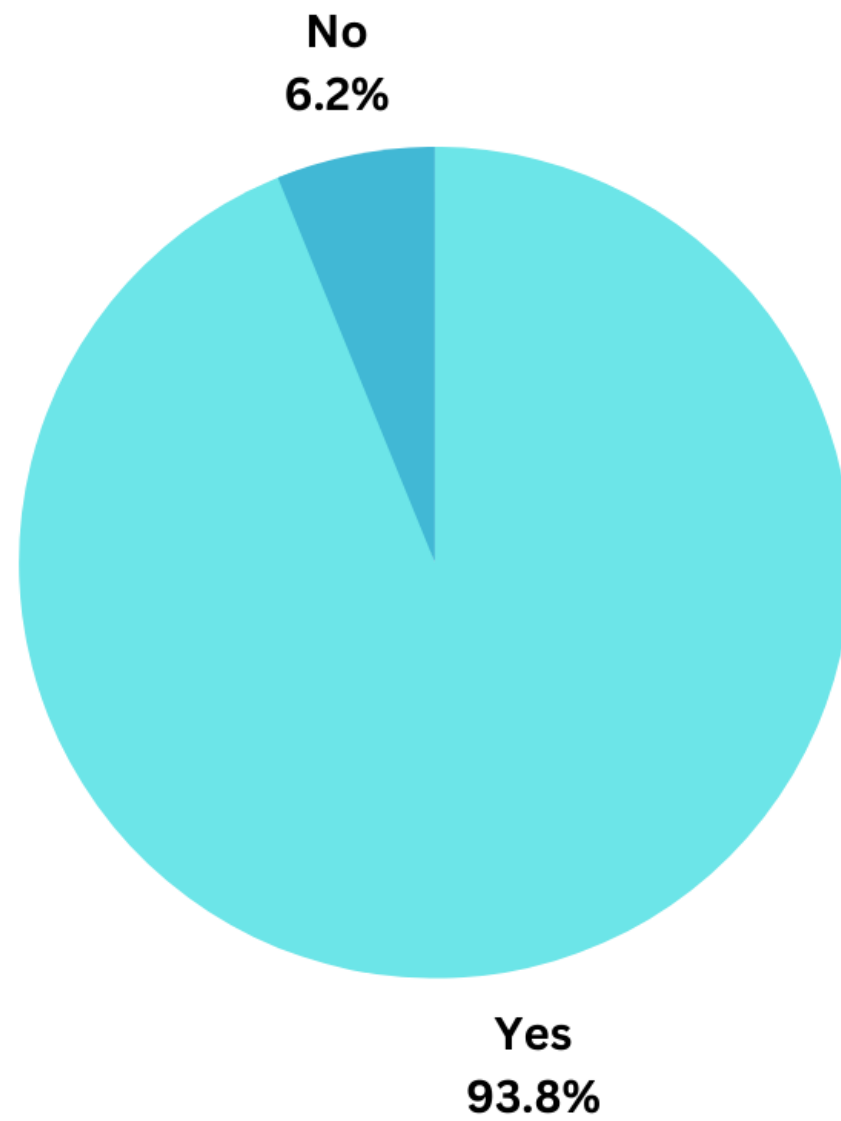


n=474



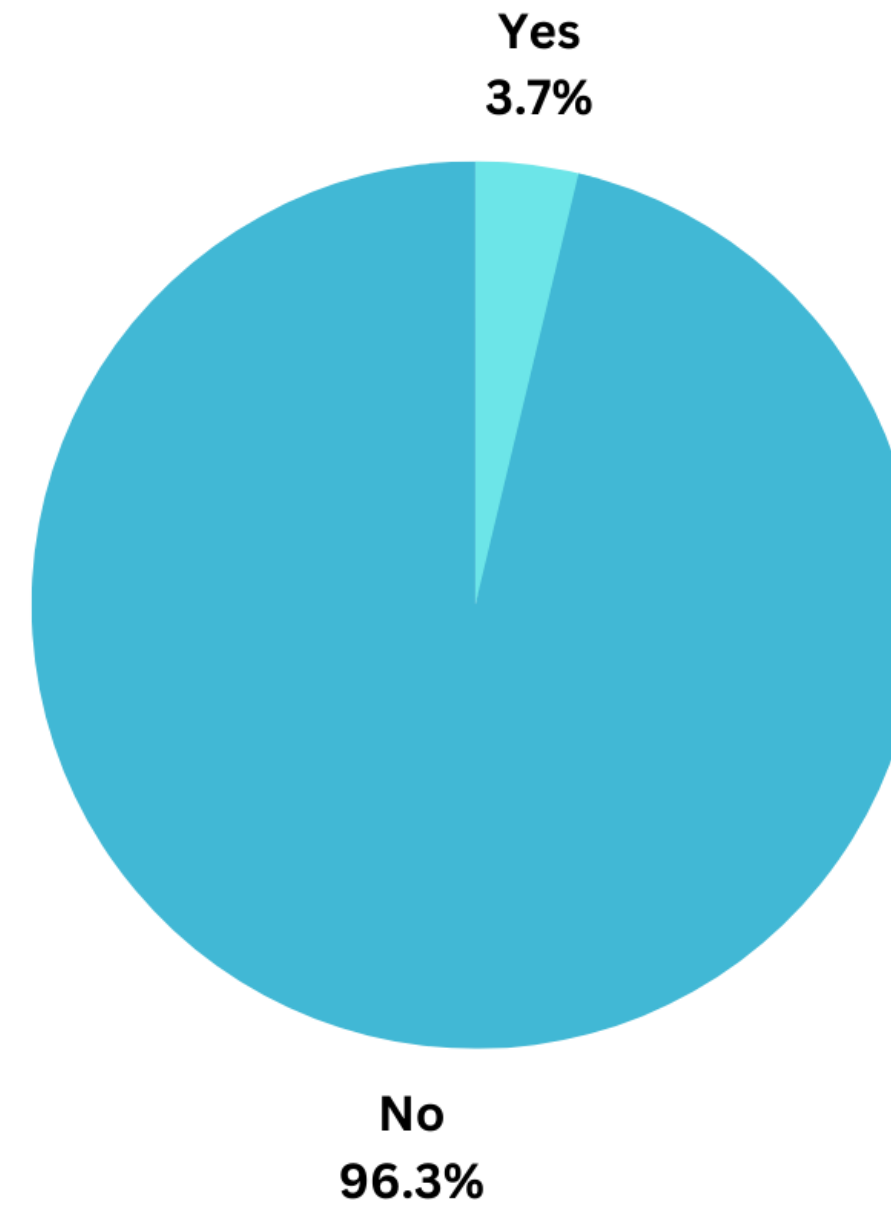
Member Survey

Have you personally found the group helpful to your own situation?



n = 215

Have you personally had (or witnessed) any negative experiences in the group?



n = 215



Collaboration

- Signpost and refer family carers to other organisations as appropriate
- Joint courses/activities
- Always open to collaborating with other organisations



seirbhís tacaíochta
cinnteoireachta

decision support service™



Age &
Opportunity



National
Cancer Screening
Service



Research



- PhD Research Project with The University of Limerick
- Rosemary Daynes-Kearney is investigating the impact of online support groups for family carers:
 - Why are they important?
 - What works well?
 - Who uses them?





Research Results



Social Identity and Online Support Groups: A Qualitative Study with Family Caregivers by Rosemary Daynes-Kearney and Stephen Gallagher published in July 2023

- Interviews were carried out with members of our support group
- Results were overwhelmingly positive with the central theme being how the group was a “lifeline” for its members
- Being a member of our online support group *does* have a positive impact on our members

Full paper is available at <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s12529-023-10203-z.pdf>





Main Themes in the Research

The group are a Tribe and the Tribe gets it

Invisibility as a common experience

*My Tribe understands I am
more than just a carer*

*Just being part of the
Tribe can be enough*

The Tribe is a lifeline and life-changing

*Sharing knowledge, experience and
support made me feel visible*

*Our connection relieves experiences of
loneliness and social isolation*

***The leadership of group moderators helped create the
Tribe identity***



Funding



- Initial funding in 2020 by the Community Foundation of Ireland and The National Lottery
- HSE recurring funding granted in 2021
 - Recognition of the value the project provides
 - Project is sustainable for the future
 - Business case submitted to the HSE for enhanced funding for 2025 and beyond



Questions?

Website: www.carealliance.ie

Find us on Twitter: [@CareAllianceIrl](https://twitter.com/CareAllianceIrl)

Contact: tara@carealliance.ie

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FamilyCarerOnlineSupportGroupIreland>



Thank you for your time and attention!