

**Care Alliance Ireland- Submission to Social Care Workers Registration Board  
Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics Bye-Law**

**February 2017**

Care Alliance Ireland are pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the proposed Social Care Workers Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics Bye-Law.

**Comments on the language and layout of the Code.**

The Code is easy to understand in its current format. However, we in Care Alliance are firm in our belief that all information which pertains to people with disabilities, cognitive impairments, literacy issues and their Family Carers is developed using accessible information guidelines. It is vital that whilst this Code of Conduct is written to inform Social Care Workers of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to ethical conduct, all members of the health and social care team around an individual as well as their families/ supporters /advocates must be aware of it in a format which is accessible to them.

**Comments on the Conduct section of the Code.**

Re point 1a of the Code: "You must treat each service user as an individual person and respect service users' relationships with their families and other caring relationships".

The National Carers Strategy (2012) specifically says that (Family) Carers "will be recognised and respected as key care partners". To this end, we feel that specific mention of Family Carers within the Code would speak to the spirit and intent of the National Carers Strategy.

Re point 2b of the Code: "You must respect the roles and expertise of health, social care and other professionals and work in partnership with them".

As above, the National Carers Strategy (2012) specifically identifies Family Carers as "key care partners". We would suggest that the review body set up within CORU as part of this process views the comprehensive 2014 literature review carried out by Care Alliance Ireland which examines the relationship between home care support workers and Family Carers. Although most social care workers in Ireland are employed to work in institutions, we believe this will change over time, in keeping with the move away from institutional settings to more home/community based settings. This will pose particular challenges to social care workers as they will likely be tasked with more face to face contact with family members which will necessitate a more considered understanding of their role of their primary clients' wider family. This speaks to the circle of support concept as articulated in more recent disability policy documents, in particular Interim Standards for New Directions, Services and Supports for Adults with Disabilities (2015) which notes that a partnership approach between disability services and family and friends is vital to any successful outcome (pg. 6).

The literature review mentioned above can be read at [www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/file/Literature%20Review%202014%20Final.pdf](http://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/file/Literature%20Review%202014%20Final.pdf)

Upwards of €4 billion worth of care annually is provided by 360,000 Family Carers in the homes of their loved ones; indicating that the vast bulk of care of those with care support needs is carried out by family members. This is often in addition to the care being carried out by social care workers. Family Carers have a significant role to play in the lives of their loved ones, whether those loved ones remain at home with the support of a social care worker, or are based in a residential setting. To not specifically refer to the expertise of Family Members, often accumulated over many years of providing care, is insufficiently respectful of the significant long-term role they play and continue to play well after individual social care workers have moved on

### **Comments on the “Performance” section of the code.**

Re point 10 of the Code: Communicate with service users, carers and other professionals.

We are pleased to see carers acknowledged specifically in the overarching title of this point of the Code. However, we feel it important to continue this specific naming of Family Carers through each of the sub-points. To ensure maximum inclusion, the definition of the term Family Carers can be detailed somewhere in the document, to specifically include friends/neighbours who may not be relatives.

The use of the term ‘carer’ when referring to Family members can be problematic and the term is also widely used when referring to paid (social) care workers.

Point 10b: “You should communicate sensitively and effectively with the carers and the families of service users, taking into account any special needs when communicating with children and vulnerable adults.”

We strongly feel that this point be prefaced by “You must” rather than “you should”, given the high level of knowledge and the significant level of care many family members provide.

Re point 14b of the Code: “You should be willing to work in collaboration with service users, professionals, support staff and others to optimise and enhance service user care”.

As above, we feel strongly that Family Carers should be specifically named here alongside professionals and support staff. This is a key point.

## **Background Information on Care Alliance Ireland**

There are approximately 360,000 Family Carers in the Republic of Ireland. Family Carer support is provided by a number of organisations, including those dedicated solely to carer support and others who support carers as part of their response to individuals with specific conditions.

Care Alliance Ireland is the National Network of Voluntary Organisations supporting Family Carers. Our vision is that the role of Family Carers is fully recognised and valued by society in Ireland. We exist to enhance the quality of life of family carers. We achieve this by supporting our 104 member organisations in their direct work with family carers through the provision of information, developing research and policy, sharing resources, and instigating opportunities for collaboration.

Our legitimacy derives from our membership base which includes all the carer organisations and virtually all of the disease/disability-specific organisations currently providing services to Ireland’s Family Carers. Our membership comprises organisations both large and small, and both regional and national.

We work with organisations in order that they can enhance the information and supports they provide to Family Carers. We provide them with opportunities to collaborate on initiatives including National Carers Week, a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary Family Carer Research Group, and joint policy submissions. We actively encourage collaboration in all our projects. We provide cohesion to those organisations working to support family carers. We commission relevant research that supports quality interventions in the lives of family carers.

By focusing on these functions we enable more of our member’s resources to go directly to coal face services.

### **Contact**

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