

# **COVID-19 INNOVATION FOR FAMILY CARERS:**

## **Supporting Family Carers Online**

**06 July 2021**

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CARE ALLIANCE IRELAND**

# In March 2020 we pivoted the work of our organisation



- Set up the Online Family Carer Support Group via the Facebook platform
  - FB chosen to 'go where the carers already are'
  - FB not without its concerns
  - High levels of privacy settings
  - Rules all members must agree to to join
- 2,562 members (<95% active)
- c6 posts, 109 comments, 288 reactions per day
- 94% retention over 12-month period
- 91% have NOT been part of face-to-face carer support groups

## Family Carer Online Support Project – Operations - July 2021



### Group Link URL

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

### Video Explaining How to Join Facebook and Join the Group

<https://youtu.be/teNo7TwDbj0>

Promotional Video <https://youtu.be/Hvr-TbFoDHQ>

**Members of Group (c2,562 >95% active)**

### Feedback/Efficacy

- Extensive Positive Qual. Feedback – 94% Member Retention/12mths
- Key Impacts/Processes Emerging – Peer Support-Possible Improvement QOL/Anxiety/Isolation
- Long Term Efficacy/Meaning - Uni. of Limerick PhD- Began Oct 2020
- Consultation via School of SW, Indiana University (Dr. D. Wilkerson)

### Recruitment/Application Process

#### Inclusion/Participation Criteria

- Must have/be willing to use Facebook (Through 'Private Group')
- Live in the Rep. of Ireland & aged 18+
- Provide Unpaid Care to Family/Friend/Neighbour
- Agree to Rules of Group (NB – Respect Privacy of Caree)

#### Participant Recruitment (Family Carers)

- Facebook
- 95 NGO Member Orgs of Care All./ Other Contacts
- Word of Mouth (Increasingly important)

#### Application Process

Apply to join the Group (Private Group) through Facebook - Answer 3 screening questions (per Inclusion Criteria above)

Application Considered by CAI Staff. Approved or Refused

(If questions not fully answered - Applicant Private Messaged – Asking to resubmit request to join)

#### Contact Details

Care Alliance, Coleraine house, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7, Republic of Ireland. [info@carealliance.ie](mailto:info@carealliance.ie) [www.carealliance.ie](http://www.carealliance.ie)  
@CareallianceIrl 01-8747776

**Objectives - Mitigate impact of loss of services to family carers and cared for due to Covid-10 - Contain Anxiety – Reduce Isolation – Use Power of Peer Support**

### Activities Within the Group

#### Posting Messages (Core Activity) c 6 p/d

- Comments/Discussion (c 109 per day, c288 reactions) – Anon. posts facilitated NB/ GDPR
- Peer support – 'I am not alone'
- Information- Dilemmas - Top Tips- Positivity Posts – Cooking Posts - Pinned Posts/Threads: Remembrance/ Petitions/Research/Humorous

#### 1-2-1 Input/Casework Core Activity c125 clients

- PM's/Phone calls/E-mails – variable levels of engagement
- Refer to Carer Support Orgs/SW Mental Health Services

**Educative Inputs** Video pre-records - 'Subject matter Expert' - Live Q&A's

**Zoom Quizzes** Monthly - Informal/Fun

**Book Club** Bi-monthly -Distribute Books – Break Out Rooms

**Distribute Books (c550)** Irish Red Cross 'Helping You Care' and Condition Specific books/resources

**Weekly Online Drop In**

**Informal Competitions** Regular Books/Gifts/Care Packages

**Gardening Club - Chair Yoga - Coffee Mornings**

**Reflections** – Iterative – Volunteer Strength – Tight Moderation - NB Peer Support – Evolution of Group Purpose - A very social Social Media – Other NGO's responses? – Risks of GDPR Breaches – Project will be needed post Covid19

### Resourcing

#### Volunteer Supporters (17) (1 p/t Staff Member)

- Current and Former Family Carers (9)
- Health and Social Care Professionals (10)
- Including 5 Professionally Qualified Social Workers
- Other Backgrounds (Researchers/Post Graduate Psych. Students) (4) (Some identify in more than one group.)
- 7 day and On-call rota

#### Roles of Staff/Volunteers

- Screen Membership Applications
- Informational Documents Uploaded Within Group
- Approve/Reject Suggested Posts (Tone/GDPR/Off Topic?/Adding Value?)
- Welcome New Members
- Monitor/Moderate Posts/Comments
- Communicate/Reiterate/Demonstrate Values
- Share Other NGO's/Organisations Relevant Posts
- Consider New Activities
- UK 'Mods Bods' FB Group- Best Practice Online/Forum Moderation
- Referrals/ Safeguarding Sustainability/Finances

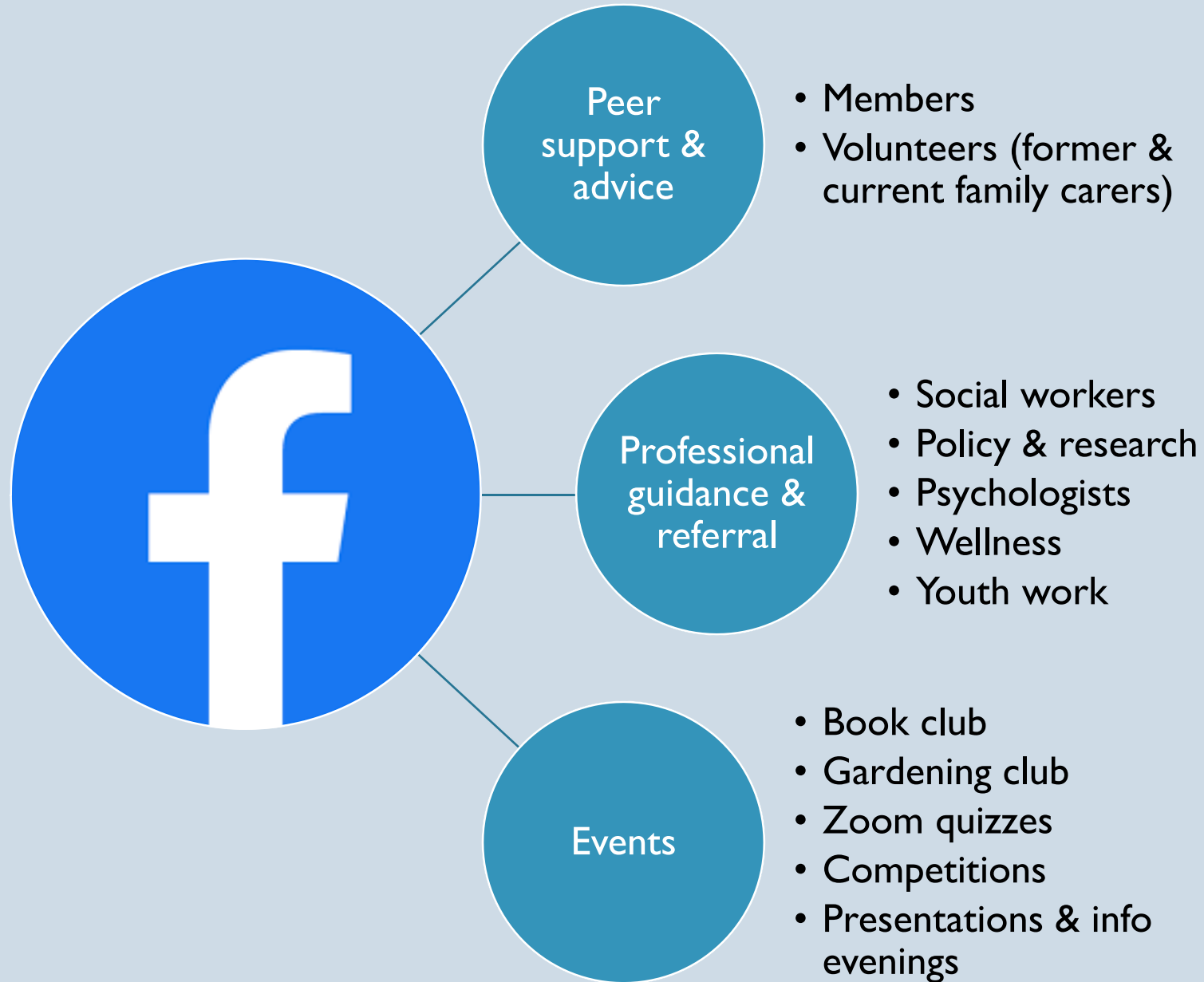
**Safeguarding** Consult Team - PM's/Phone Call/Zoom to Family Carer - Consult Local Mental Health Service - Contact Gardai

**Engagement Data (12 mths.)** – 2,015 posts – 39,609 comments – 104,927 reactions – 1 complaint – 100's of positive comments and qualitative feedback

#### Private FB Online 'Mods/Vols' Group

- Peer Support -Bi-Weekly Zoom Meeting
- Discuss Practice Issues/Dilemmas
- Discuss Group Posts/Tone/Engagement
- Information/Policy Updates

# Online Family Carer Support Group - Operations



# Moderating – keeping a tidy house

- Not manageable by CAI staff team alone - some board members volunteered to help (with relevant backgrounds)
- Made contact with professionals we had links with (SW, Psychology, Ageing/ Dementia Research etc.)
- Assembled a team of moderators/admins and volunteers
- Family carers (both current and former) key part of the team
- 2<sup>nd</sup> private group for moderators & volunteers to provide support for difficult situations etc.

<b>Moderators/ Admins</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>
Approve membership requests	Welcome new members
Approve new threads	Review posts in discussions for rule breaches
Lock threads/ discussions	Highlight issues of concern to moderators/ admins
Delete posts	
Sanction members	

# Resourcing

- June 2020 - Received once off funding of €10k from Community Foundation of Ireland for hampers and video sessions on various topics suggested by members
- Once off National Lottery Funds (€13k)
- Community Foundation funding for a part-time project worker ( €32k, 12 months)

# Feedback

*“Thank you so much for this group. I've been officially caring for my mother since January and there have been many occasions over the last few weeks when I've just needed a boost not just because of the virus but because of the rollercoaster of emotions, tiredness, someone to understand and I see it in the posts of other carers to know I am not alone and that everything a carer does makes a difference”*



*“I'm only a couple days on here as I didn't know about this group b4. In my couple of days on here I don't feel alone as a family carer & have learnt so much with a lot of support, no nasty comments or attacks..... this is by far a wonderful group to be a part of, thanks to admin & all who r involved & for all da lovely kind-hearted carers out there... stay safe”*

# THANK YOU, QUESTIONS?

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