

# SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE TEACHING IN NON-TRADITIONAL, DESK-BASED SETTINGS

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# CARE ALLIANCE IRELAND

- Umbrella organisation – not-for-profit groups who support Irelands 360,000 family carers (people who provide care for a family member, friend, or neighbour)
- 85 members; family carers specific groups, disability specific groups and general support organisations
- Research, policy, macro-advocacy, organisation support, governance
- Coordinate National Carers Week with 11 other partner organisations (June each year)
- Work is primarily desk-based; Most of our work does not involve supporting carers directly – high use of signposting, making connections and collaborating across the sector.

# SOCIAL WORK & CARE ALLIANCE

- Family carers in Ireland usually do not get assigned a social worker- but those they care for often do; increasing the knowledge of SW's on caring issues at student level is critical
- In Care Alliance- A type of 'macro social work'- using skills to affect change on a large scale
- SWs study social policy & research; desk-based placement is a chance to see this in action and understand why certain actions must be taken
- A chance for deep reflection – not many “crises” in policy work!

# AN ODD TASK FOR A SOCIAL WORKER...

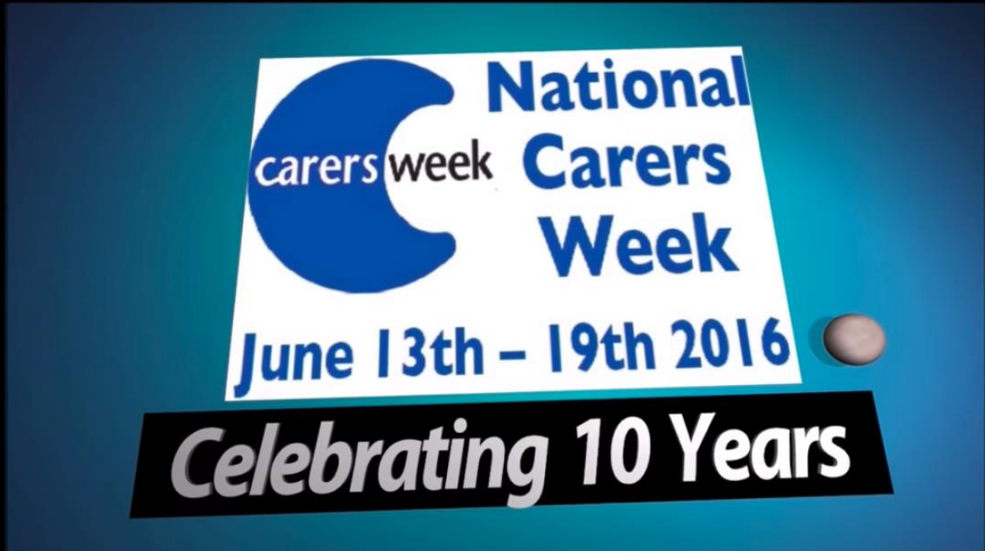
- Barry on placement with us in 2016
- Had preference for medical social work as a career
- Prior experience in mental health and intellectual disability work
- 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations for National Carers Week 2016 – let's make a video!



*Donal McKenna (Care Alliance Chair) & Barry at the launch of National Carers Week 2016*

# TASKS

- Project manage the project
- Liaise with 10 organisations across the sector - some more enthusiastic than others!
- Organise meetings, manage interview to get relevant information
- Timekeeping, organization skills
- Understanding of the relevant organisations & policy context
- Technology skills
- Creativity – script writing to get a message across
- Getting over nerves!



Ambassador for National Carers Week



Deirdre Shanagher  
The Irish Hospice Foundation





# BARRY'S LEARNING

When researching for my placement I had some questions and queries about my work that I would be undertaking while on placement. As it wasn't a traditional social work placement and I would have very little contact with clients, what would my actual role be? If I wasn't seeing any client interaction where would the aspect of theory come into my placement? What kind of skills would I be learning and introduced to?

[T]his placement taught me the skills and values to proceed to my next social work placement. It showed me the importance of doing what I say I am going to do, it showed me the importance of professional relationships, it showed me the importance of staying true to my word and to how I want to be perceived and viewed as a professional social worker; honest, trustworthy, professional, open minded and most importantly - I want to be viewed as someone reliable, someone who when they say they are going to do something, they will.

# BARRY'S LEARNING (CONTD.)

[This placement] showed me that although I will be working to enhance someone else's life, my life is also extremely important in helping someone else. For instance, in my reflective practice I always viewed it as how my actions affected them. When I would finish work on the way home or while I was in the gym, I would be going over seeing how the next time I could improve myself or if I could have made a different decision or handled it differently. This placement showed me that it is also extremely important to see how they affect me as a person, and to realise that if something makes me feel uncomfortable or in a way that is negative, I need to be aware of it and question why does it make me feel like that.



# KEY LEARNING FOR SOCIAL WORK

- Many qualified social workers are not working as “social workers” – yet use those skills every day.
- Previous research – some social workers “*conflate the definition of social work with their understanding of what is required of statutory social workers*” (Scholar et. al. 2012)
- Social workers need to have a good grasp of policy, legislation and supports offered outside of the statutory sector (especially in Ireland)
- Non-traditional placements, in particular if facilitated by social workers, offer chances for skill and knowledge development
- Opportunities for reflection

# THANK YOU!

- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Reflections?



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