

Press Release

June 11th 2019 – for Immediate Release

International Project Seeks to Deliver Improved Wellbeing for Ireland’s 60,000 Dementia Family Carers

As National Carers Week continues across the country, family carers providing care for someone with dementia are to be given an opportunity to benefit from their ‘friendships’ on social media.

An online ‘friendsourcing’ project will begin recruiting family carers over the coming weeks, giving the opportunity for Facebook friends to offer support to those who they know are caring for a relative with dementia.

The ‘friendsourcing’ will be combined with intensive professionally moderated online support through a closed peer-support Facebook group.

In collaboration with dementia experts in Indiana University and the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland looks forward to leading this exciting new project.

Speaking about the project, Professor David Wilkerson, Indiana University said:

“Family Carers’ social and support networks can shrink when caregiving role demands increase. This intervention provides carers practice and support in the use of social media to develop their social and support networks online. The intervention has been shown in previous research to have the potential to improve coping, reduce burden, and reduce perceived stress.”

Dr Daniel Bateman, a collaborator on the project from the Indiana Alzheimer Disease Center at Indiana University, said “Most family carers don’t take time for themselves, because they are too busy caring for their loved one. This is one of the main reasons that carers don’t attend support groups. Friendsourcing lets carers receive the support they need on their own schedule, online, without having to leave home or the person with dementia.”

Fergus Timmons, Development Manager with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland said, “We are very pleased to be involved in this exciting initiative. We think it will provide a new and innovative way to support family carers of people with dementia, who often feel isolated and frustrated in their role.”

Notes to Editors

About the Project

This project has been made possible thanks to funding under the Dormant Accounts (Carers Measure).

The concept of friendsourcing has already been successfully trialled in the United States by a multi-disciplinary team at Indiana University. Between 2016 and 2018 more than 60 family caregivers benefitted from friendsourcing. Research undertaken with participants at the end of the project found that friendsourcing had led to:

- a significant reduction in caregiving burden
- a significant reduction in perceived stress
- a significant increase in emotional and informational support scores.

Participants for this project will be current dementia family carers in Ireland who are active users of Facebook and who have at least 20 Facebook ‘friends’. Recruitment of the first group of 20 family carers is scheduled to begin in early July. It is planned to have at least four groups of participants involved in consecutive eight-week interventions, which will include pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and follow up focus groups. The project has received ethical approval from the Indiana University Ethics Board (Internal Review Board).

Those interested in keeping up to date with this project can subscribe to the project newsletter [here](#)

For media queries please contact the project lead Liam O’Sullivan on 087 207 3265 or email friendsourcing@carealliance.ie



About National Carers Week

Family carers provide care and support to a person with a disability, chronic condition, mental health concern and/or long-term illness, in the person's own home. National Carers Week, now in its thirteenth year, is coordinated by Care Alliance Ireland in partnership with 11 other leading Irish charities who support family carers: the Alzheimer Society, Family Carers Ireland, the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC), the Irish Cancer Society, the Disability Federation, MS Ireland, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, the Irish Hospice Foundation, St. Michael's House, the Special Needs Parents Association, Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland.

For more figures and data on family carers in Ireland see

<http://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/file/Infographic%20CA%20Final.pdf>

Details of the events taking place throughout National Carers week are available at

www.carersweek.ie Contact Kevin Deegan info@carersweek.ie 085 852 9352