
BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON AREA CARERS SUPPORT GROUP

Banbridge & Craigavon Area



Carers Support Group

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Jenny McGarry
NI Statistics And Research Agency
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Received By
Carers Office for
Northern Ireland
04 OCT 2004

Dear Ms McGarry

**RE: N.I. MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION MEASURE 2004:
CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

The Banbridge & Craigavon Area Carers' Support Group (B&CACSG) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the above mentioned consultation document. The B&CACSG was set up in 1990 to support carers in the area by providing information, advice, training and support to carers in the Banbridge area. Support for carers provided by the Group includes monthly Support Group meetings in Banbridge, Ballyward, Gilford, Laurencetown, Dromore, Donaghcloney and from 2003 Portadown. Two twelve-week 'Training For Carers' courses take place every year and a Newsletter is sent out every three months to approximately 350 carers in the Banbridge area alone.

The office/Support Centre is opened five mornings per week for carers to call in for information, advice and support. Referral to other agencies and advocacies are also provided for carers. A number of social outings are arranged during the year, as it is very important that carers get a break. The Group also provides a Saturday Respite for the elderly and confused elderly where they learn different skills and enjoy the time away from home, as well as giving their carers a much needed break.

It is with some concern that I note the omission in the document of carers as a group experiencing deprivation. Carers on average spend 50 hours a week looking after a sick or disabled relative or friend without proper breaks or holidays. There are approximately 250,000 carers in Northern Ireland. Research shows that 66% of carers in Northern Ireland living with a dependant, rely on benefits as their main source of

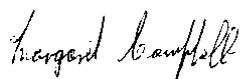
income. According to research by Carers UK, six out of ten carers providing substantial amounts of care, had given up paid work to care. In the same research, seven out of ten carers found themselves financially worse off since becoming a carer. Of those carers providing 50 hours care per week, 20% are suffering from poor health, double the proportion for the non-carer population. It is clear that this group of people experience deprivation – both economically and in terms of quality of life and should therefore be included in one of the Domains for measuring deprivation in Northern Ireland.

Although some discussion takes place under the Employment Deprivation Indicator, it is argued that carers are not 'involuntarily' out of the labour market. While some carers are not engaged in paid employment, it is questionable if this is a matter of choice. Furthermore, some carers might be working on a part-time basis and/or low paid jobs in an attempt to juggle their responsibilities as a carer with the need to earn a living. It should also be noted that children and young people and people of retirement age can be carers, but these groups would possibly not be captured in the Employment Indicator.

Inclusion of carers in the Health Deprivation and Disability Domain might be more appropriate. The background information to this discusses 'unjust' and 'unexpected' disadvantage due to ill-health or disability as a criteria for inclusion in this Domain. Although this ill-health or disability is not experienced by the carers directly, this group of people do experience deprivation as a result of this, although a vast number of carers do suffer from ill-health as a result of their caring role.

I would agree that measurement of the receipt of Invalid Care Allowance would only capture a limited number of carers. However, figures on the number of carers in each District/Super Output Area should be available from local Health Trusts, Health & Social Services Boards and support organisations.

Yours sincerely



Margaret Campbell
Carers Support & Development Manager