

Carers Finland

Strategy 2023

Informal translation by Sari Tervonen Nov, 2019

Preface

The Strategy 2023 of the Carers' Community, ie, Carers Finland (also pointed out as central organisation/central association) and local Carers' Associations was approved by the GA of Carers Finland in April 2019. Our goal is to create understanding, that caring affects everyone in the society and that it has broad impact across society.

The strategy was worked out jointly by representatives of the local associations (volunteers and employees) and employees of the central association. We had joint strategy meetings and online surveys dealing with the areas of the strategy. The Central association also asked for other stakeholders' views at thematic meetings. In addition, any informal caregiver or people who were interested in the development of informal caring issues were able to comment by responding to an online survey.

This document outlines the strategic guidelines for actions and principles for evaluating the implementation of the strategy until 2023. The family Carers' Community is made up of the central association and its local associations and the strategy applies to both levels.

The background materials of the document include an analysis of trends in the society in general, summaries of group works and surveys, a process description and background text on the historical development of the Finnish service system and caregiving legislation. The background material is available online at www.omaishoitajat.fi/strategia2023. One of the most important document is an advocacy program that is also included to the background material.

A strategy group named by the Board of Carers Finland had the responsibility of the strategy process. The strategy is a program for making change that describes the desired future that can be achieved. As the Carers' Community we are at the forefront of how Finland as a society, together with caregivers, builds solutions for the future of informal caring. Most of care is informal, approximately 80 %. Yet, by 2023, the society is likely to have changed in ways that could not be taken into account in the strategy process. According to the values of the Carers' Community, we are sensitive and up-to-date. In addition, we regularly evaluate our strategy implementation, providing tools for redefining the strategy.

We hope the strategy inspires our Carers' Community to work hard for advocacy and for wellbeing of caregivers!

Board of the Carers Finland

Introduction: Caring as Values for Society

Values are desirable goals of human activity that guide choices. The values reflect the norms that guide our operations and tell us what is good, and how we should treat each other. Values are intrinsically linked to choices and decision-making. There are globally ten types of values that, according to research, are similar all over the world. When these values are prioritized according to what people consider most important, that is, the most valuable, benevolence becomes the most important value in Finland and elsewhere. Goodwill means taking care of your loved ones. (Helkama 2015.) From this point of view, caring is one of the most important ways of reflecting our values.

The fact that caring is respected does not yet tell us how caring and helping loved ones should be implemented in society. In the welfare state, care is provided at the social level, but this does not diminish the importance of family and other fellows as providers of support and care. Social welfare and health services in society do not diminish the help of those close to them, but on the contrary, in countries where public services are well available, a larger number of relatives occasionally help their loved ones (Brandt 2013). The welfare state reflects cultural norms related to care. Caring is part of the life cycle at different stages. Humans are born helpless and are to be cared for by others. During one's lifetime, the roles of the caregiver and the care recipient will vary depending on individual differences and life situations. However, all of us are at some point in contact with caring.

The Finnish social model of the welfare state, in which the state bears responsibility for the care of its citizens, also includes respect for equality. From the point of view of services and care, this means equal access to services. The importance of equality is also reflected in the Finnish family model, which is characterized by the employment and gender equality of both spouses. (Keurulainen 2014.)

When talking about the Finnish family, one can also see a change in communality from the so-called extended family to a nuclear family (parents and one to two children). This in turn reflects the appreciation of individuality, where one belongs to a smaller unit, where everyone makes his or her own life choices. The importance of equality can also be seen in the fact that, for example, non-heterosexual family relationships are recognized in society by law (Equal Marriage Act). Family relationships and intimacy are respected and wanted to be made possible for all members of society. (Keurulainen 2014.)

Ultimately, what is important to a person as an individual, to a community, or to society and values, is expressed in actions. In society, the value of caregiving can be seen in the actions taken to improve - or weaken - the role of carers.

Mission and Values of the Carers' Community

Our mission

The Central association works with local associations to support informal carers. The central association is also responsible for supporting local associations.

Our vision

Informal care affects everyone and all areas of society.

The goals are

- Strengthening an understanding of informal caring
- Advocating that informal caring is considered not only in social and health policies, but also in other relevant areas of society, including education, employment and economy, as well as housing, environment and transport.
- Promoting support for informal carers
- Developing care solutions.

Carers, caregiving and the community

A carer is a person who takes care of a family member or other loved one, who due to illness, disability or other special need for care cannot cope with his/her daily life on his/her own. Carers can be carers with or without a contract with their municipality. Carers are defined as people, who are primarily responsible for their loved ones needs and coping at home.

There are up to 350 000 carers in Finland. About 60 000 of them are in a binding and demanding informal care situation. In 2018, nearly 47 000 people received informal care support with a contract from their municipality. Carers are of different ages as well as care recipients can be of all ages. There are even 1000 minor aged carers with contracts.

Carers help their loved ones in many ways: physically, mentally, socially and often also economically. Carers promote the autonomy of their loved ones in their daily activities. Carers act as guardians of their loved ones when their ability to take care of themselves is decreased. Sometimes carers also act as an official guardian of their loved ones (ombudsman according to law and rules).

The informal Carers' Community is made up of the central association and its local associations. All individuals and organizations involved in caring for their loved ones and also all who want to promote this strategy can be a part of the Carers' Community.

Our values**Responsibility:**

As the Carers' Community we value caregivers and their families. Our actions and advocacy are based on expertise, and systematic and effective way of acting. We regularly evaluate our results.

Sensitivity:

We respond quickly to the needs of carers and carers' associations as well other stakeholders' messages. We operate in a human-centered and flexible manner. We anticipate the future.

Transparency:

We explain our activities openly. We encourage to dialogue in our Carers' Community and with partners.

Partnership:

We value expertise based on experience and research. We collaborate and network ourselves with other organizations and the public sector.

Strategic guidelines

1. Informal caring as a significant part of policy
2. Strengthening the Carers' Community
3. Developing and safeguarding volunteering within the Community

1. Informal caring as a significant part of policy

Outcomes

- Strengthening and clarifying the legal position of carers in the social and health care sector and in the respective legislation.
- Raising awareness of caring issues in different areas of social policy. This is defined in detail in the the advocacy program.
- Building the Carers' Community that is close and nationwide, and in the provinces¹ the voice of the Community is heard in welfare policy (praxis and law making)
- Strengthening the role of the Community as an information provider and expert

Strategic measures

- Developing community-based advocacy: national and provincial advocacy and EU-level advocacy (linked to Eurocarers' Enabling Strategy) carers to care.

The aim is to achieve an EU-level and national care program.

We use STEA² general funding and our own funds.

o Co-developing of counselling / advocacy activities in collaboration with the central association and local associations

o Carers' Community more strongly involving in the Eurocarers research network.

o Issues related to caregiving and advocacy for caregivers advocacy development project. Applying for STEA project funding for years 2020-2022 (Obs! The focus on the issues of carers in working age)

- Strengthening the Organisations for Carers Network Finland and increasing its activity in the provinces, full time employee since 2020. Applying for an increase in STEA special funding.

¹ Provinces meaning 18 counties/provinces according to the national reform(plan) of social and health care.

² STEA is the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations operating under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

2. Strengthening the Carers' Community

Outcomes

- Strengthening the common identity, dialogue and communication of the Carers' Community.
- Developing and renewing the way in which the central association and local associations are operating.

Strengthening the common identity of the central association and the local associations, as well as communication and operating models means:

- Strengthening the team spirit of the Community
- Image building and improvements of communication and its methods
- Developing and implementing of an online member and event management software
- Common tools for documenting and archiving on the web (software).

Strategic measures

- Developing electronic tools to support electronic communication and association activities.
IT Development Project: Membership Register, Event Management and Document Management software platforms, procurement and deployment project. Applying for STEA project funding for the years 2020.
- Joint Communication Working Group with the local associations.
- Campaigning: Concept of Pop Up Coffee Day Campaigning in 2019. Goal is to move on to campaigning for Eurocarers as a European carer Day - Carers' Day (date, even starting year is still open, tentative target year 2020). We use STEA general funding and our own funding.

3. Developing and safeguarding volunteering in the Community

Outcomes

- Developing peer-to-peer and community-based volunteering activity forms.
- Securing the development and funding of non-governmental advocacy activities.
- Collaborating with local associations to obtain financial grants for projects (also from for example municipalities, EU-grants)
- Increasing opportunities for the joint fundraising of the central association and local association.

Strategic measures

- Developing the capacity of volunteers to influence the role of carers in their own municipalities and provinces (education and support for associations, provincial meetings). Using STEA general funding.
- Collaborative Project Development: Employees of local association working together (project clusters, possibly involving social care organisations other than informal care associations).
- Contributing to grants: STEA funding policies and provinces / regions influencing organizational and municipal funding.
- Joint Evaluation Development Task Force: To model a joint evaluation system regarding to the activities of the central association and the local associations, to highlight the social aspects and importance of our informal care activities
- Responding to donors' demands and helping to develop further operations in fundraising.
- Joint fundraising activities with local associations.