

Expert Caring Dementia Evaluation Report



Expert Carers is a range of training courses for informal carers - people who look after a family member or friend who has long-term illness, a disability or who is elderly or frail.

VOCAL's 'Expert Carers' training programme offers carers the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills enabling them to become expert carers. Since 1995, over 1,000 carers have attended VOCAL's courses and seminars learning from practitioners, topic experts and peers allowing them a greater understanding of rights, services and caring issues.

The Expert Carers courses are organised and facilitated by VOCAL and national and local partner agencies. The continually evolving programme offers generic and condition specific courses as well as events focusing on relevant legislation and policy ensuring there is something to meet the needs of carers from all caring situations.

The Expert Caring programme builds upon and reinforces the idea of carers as key partners in the provision of care introduced in the 'Community Care and Health Act 2000' recognising the important role informal carers play securing the quality of life of the cared for person. The concept of 'Expert Carers' features in the 'Future of Unpaid Care in Scotland'

The Expert Carers training programme is funded and supported by NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh and the Big Lottery Fund.

"Many thanks for all your endeavours in covering such a complex topic as "Looking to the Future with Dementia". It has been most interesting,...will hopefully make the future a little easier to cope with. Many thanks"

The Course

Many carers looking after someone with a progressive condition like dementia are concerned about what the future holds. Long term care issues are very complex and the portrayal of the care homes in the British media can exacerbate concerns. The course was designed to address some of the concerns by answering the questions that carers raise most frequently.

The course was run on Monday mornings between the 6th February and the 20th March. Each session was followed by a sandwich lunch to give the participants a chance to discuss their experiences and exchange tips.

Publicity

The course was publicised through various means in the hope of reaching carers who were perhaps unaware of the support available to them.

Course leaflets were distributed to Edinburgh's Dementia Care Coordinators to share with carers they have contact with.

Leaflets were distributed to dementia support projects, day centres and respite services, social work centres and local care support projects to display and to pass on to carers with whom they have contact.

The course was promoted through VOCAL's quarterly newsletter 'Carers News' which has a circulation of approximately 5000

The participants

Twelve carers registered to participate in the course. All twelve attended one or more session of the course and six attended all sessions. The group who registered were joined for several sessions by two carers who had only found out about the course once it had begun.

Two carers were caring for a parent, one for a grandparent and the rest were caring for a spouse. There were four male carers in the group.

The impact of the course on the carers and cared for

Several carers spoke of the positive impact the course had had on their ability to cope with their situation. Carers described an increase in confidence, patience, and a decrease in stress levels. One carer said:

"It has been helpful to discover that other people with a spouse or partner affected also find the situation very painful and the information given in the sessions has raised my confidence in being able to anticipate future issues."

This comment reflects many in relation to meeting others in a similar situation. Three participants specifically mentioned that they had found meeting others very useful.

One carer spoke about a change in his philosophy as a result of the course and he felt this was a positive

thing. *"It was of great use to me if only to help me count my blessings and to give me lots of contacts."*

One carer accessed a significant amount of support following the course including a home help for her mother three times a day seven days a week. This has given her the opportunity to take some time for herself.

One carer received on-going support from the Dementia Coordinator co-facilitating the course who is now regularly visiting her mother.

One carer commented that she now has a greater knowledge of the type of dementia involved, what has caused it and how to deal with some of the behaviour associated.

The impact of the course on VOCAL

Three carers accessed VOCAL's Counselling Service through the course.

Three carers from the course attended a changing relationships workshop facilitated by VOCAL's Counselling Service Manager.

One carer has applied to be a volunteer advocate with VOCAL's Advocacy Service.

The impact of the course on external services

Two carers visited Queen Margaret College University with VOCAL's Training Officer to speak to a group of final year

"I think I am now much more informed and if at some time in the future my wife and I need help, my first reaction will be to travel through my notes for useful information"

occupational therapy students about their experiences.

One carer registered for an NHS course about dementia which they found out about on the course.

One carer found out about a lunch club her husband could attend via another course participant and has made use of the service to provide her husband with stimulation and give herself a break.

One carer had requested a carers assessment following the course and had also looked into Powers of Attorney to enable her to effectively manage money.

One carer contacted The Care Commission following the course to gather information about respite and potentially long term care.

One carer used the information gathered on the course to access support through contact with a social worker. The carer and the person cared for now access services to support them including a day centre and longer periods of respite.

Two carers are now in the process of applying for council tax discounts after finding out about discounts for individuals with severe mental impairment on the course.

"An extremely well run and comprehensive course with friendly, helpful staff and a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere. a good opportunity to exchange views with other carers"

Course Content

6th February

What is Dementia

Liz Taylor -Dementia Care Coordinator - NHS Lothian

13th February

Changing Relationships

Anne Chilton - Counsellor

20th February

Options For Future

Liz Taylor -Dementia Care Coordinator - NHS Lothian & Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

27th February

How to Select a Care Home

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

6th March

Who Pays For Long Term Care?

Jane Greenacre- Training Officer - VOCAL

13th March

Adults with Incapacity Act

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

15th March

Open Session

Liz Taylor -Dementia Care Coordinator - NHS Lothian & Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

This course was co-facilitated by Jane Greenacre of VOCAL and Liz Taylor of NHS Lothian

"Now have a better understanding of Dementia and know that there is help available out there when needed"

