

# Expert Caring Looking After Someone 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.

**"Very interesting and informative.  
Course for someone wondering in the  
wilderness not knowing where to go.  
VOCAL can help"**

## **The Course**

The course was open to carers from all caring situations with the objective of increasing their knowledge and understanding of supports available to them and the person they care for. Through seven sessions delivered by expert speakers, carers were able to learn to care in a way that is safe for them and effective for the cared for person.

## **Publicity**

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

Leaflets with a course programme and a registration postcard were circulated to 200 carers who had recently contacted the centre.

Leaflets were sent to local carers organisations to be forwarded to carers and for information to be put in newsletters.

Carers indicated they had found out about the course from a variety of sources. including a day centre, local carers organisations, family and friends, referral from VOCAL staff members and direct mailings.

## **The participants**

Twenty-two carers registered for the course with seventeen attending one or more session.

Carers came from a diverse cross section of caring situations. with people caring for parents,

friend.

The illnesses and conditions affecting the cared for person were very varied and included mental health problems, learning disabilities, blood disorder, Alzheimers and multiple sclerosis.

### **The impact of the course on the carers and cared for**

One carer received information about sitter services and went on to access them.

One carer found out about the Ca(i)re Project and accessed the courses available through them.

One carer found out about and applied for a carers discount on the council tax bill and another applied for the discount for severe mental impairment.

Two carers found out about the taxi card available through Edinburgh City Council and applied.

Four carers learnt about and applied for the Cinema Exhibitors card allowing carers to accompany someone with disability to the cinema free of charge.

One carer received an Edinburgh Leisure card entitling them to make use of gym and swimming facilities at a number of local sites free of charge.

One carer described in detail the

effect that the course had had on them as an individual in terms of personal growth.

Another carer described the effect the course had had on her confidence;

*"made me feel less isolated and more confident in asking for help ..... And more inclined to consider my own needs, as well as those of person I care for!"*

One carer said that she had difficulty caring for herself as she was so busy looking after her husband, but said that the course and looking after yourself session in particular had helped her to understand how important it was.

Several carers described how positive it was to spend time with other carers in similar situations;

*"getting to know a lot of other people have caring roles was a service for me".*

One carer spoke about the effect the course had had on his interaction with other people. He had found himself better able to cope in challenging situations with the person he cared for, and the agencies he was brought into contact with. He felt this was due to being able to discuss things with others and due to an increased understanding of the viewpoint of others.

### **The impact of the course on VOCAL**

One carer sought advice from VOCAL Advice Worker regarding housing benefit and council tax benefit.

Another carer received advice and

**" I have a greater awareness of what is going on around me"**

**"Really understanding just the right place for me"**

practical support with a dispute with the Local Authority regarding council tax discounts he heard about through the course.

Two carers attended appointments at the Pension Credit Surgery that VOCAL facilitates with an advisor from the Department of Work and Pensions.

Four course participants took part in a Stress management workshop facilitated by VOCAL's group work programme.

Five course participants registered for other courses in VOCAL's Expert Training Programme looking at topics such as housing and direct payments.

Two course participants decided to volunteer with VOCAL one as a centre volunteer working in reception and dealing with many administration tasks and another as a carer's advocate.

One carer has accessed support from VOCAL's Counselling Service.

Three participants registered for other courses available through the Expert Carers Programme including a course specifically for parent carers, a course about looking to the future with someone with a learning difficulty and a course about housing.

*"Attending VOCAL has made me feel valued and cared for. I have enjoyed meeting the staff and other course participants and have looked forward to Wednesdays"*

## Course Content

1st February

### **Understanding the Human Body**

Marie McRae and Fiona Wann -  
Physiotherapists - NHS Lothian

8th February

### **Understanding Medicines**

Melanie Clendenning -  
Pharmacist -NHS Lothian

15th February

### **How Community Care Affects Carers**

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer  
- VOCAL

22nd February

### **Money Matters and Welfare Benefits**

Sheena Smith - Advice Officer -  
VOCAL

1st March

### **Effective Communication**

Jane Greenacre- Training Officer  
- VOCAL

8th March

### **Changing Relationships**

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer  
- VOCAL

15th March

### **Looking After Yourself**

Jane Greenacre -Training Officer  
-VOCAL

**"In the past I have struggled along and now it is nice to know there is someone there if I need it. Thanks to Jane and all the team"**

