

Expert Caring Child with Special Needs 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.

"The professional and friendly manner it (the course) was conducted was very impressive. The staff were very approachable and would help you with any information you required"

The Course

The course was designed to meet the needs of carers supporting a child with special needs and was developed to answer the most frequently asked questions of parent carers. The was not tailored to any specific caring situation and was open to all carers of a child under 16. The course was aimed primarily at those caring for someone under the age of 12 but would have been relevant to all using children's services.

The course was offered by VOCAL Carers Centre on Wednesday mornings between the 10th of May and the 28th June 2006.

Publicity

The course was promoted through a range of means including a direct mailing to carers who are listed on VOCAL's mailing list as caring for a child with special needs.

The course leaflets were also sent to special needs schools, social work teams, local carers organisations and groups which support either children with special needs or their carers. All these groups were asked to disseminate the information to carers they had contact with via newsletters, displays and in person.

The participants

course participants were female. Sixteen of the participants were mother to the person they cared for and two were professional carers paid through direct payments by one of the mothers attending.

The children supported represented a broad cross section of disability including global learning delay, autism, ADHD, Aspergers Syndrome Angelman Syndrome and no diagnosis.

Six participants received assistance with transport and care costs.

The impact of the course on the carers and cared for

Several carers participating in the course commented on the impact of meeting others in similar situations. One described a feeling of reduced isolation;

“Attending (the course) helps you feel less alone and very supported and understood”

Two carers who met at the course continue to see each other socially and a number of carers exchanged telephone numbers.

One carer described in detail the positive effect the course had had on her. She spoke of an increased confidence discovered through gaining information and meeting others.

“I have learnt a bit from the

course so I feel more confident”

All of the participants who participated in the post course evaluation process indicated that the course was useful and they anticipated using the information in the future.

The impact of the course on VOCAL

Several carers registered for further courses in VOCAL’s Expert Carers programme including a seminar on direct payments and a short course on looking after yourself.

Four carers will participate in day trips offered by VOCAL over the Autumn of 2006.

Four carers participated in workshops offered by VOCAL’s Counselling and Group Work service.

One carer had an appointment with VOCAL’s Carers Advice and Support Worker to discuss difficulties with respite, in particular Summer holiday provision. The carer received advice on her rights and practical support to pursue the matter by telephone and letter.

One carer approached VOCAL’s Advocacy Service after hearing about it on the course and received support at several meetings with Social Work Services regarding direct payments.

Seven carers participated in VOCAL’s carers week event accessing complementary therapies and healthy eating advice.

“I found all the staff at VOCAL very friendly and willing to help you with anything you needed to know”

“An excellent course . The more you put in (questions, etc,) the more benefit you get”

The impact of the course on external services

One carer found out about free transport for people with disabilities and their carers and has applied for bus and train passes.

One carer has approached the NCH Outreach service after hearing about them on the course.

A carer was able to access safe dental treatment for her son following discussion with the pharmacist about alternatives to the most common medications.

A carer has begun to make changes to her son's diet following the presentation by the Dietitian. This is a really positive development for the family and one she credits to the course.

Two carers applied for Edinburgh Leisure cards through the scheme that VOCAL and Edinburgh Leisure are offering together allowing carers to access low cost fitness sessions.

After receiving application forms on the course three carers applied for Cinema Exhibitor cards allowing carers to attend the cinema with someone additional needs free of charge.

Several carers discussed the special event at Edinburgh Zoo held for children with special needs and their families annually. Carers who had not previously heard of the event received information about how to get on the invitation list from those who had attended previously.

Two carers received information about the Ca (i)re project and its courses and decided to join the mailing list to receive regular updates.

Course Content

10th May

Understanding Medication

Marjorie Gutteridge - Pharmacist -NHS Lothian

17th May

Diet and Nutrition

Laura Stewart - Dietitian -NHS Lothian

24th May

Support in the Community

Michael Barr - Social Worker - City of Edinburgh Council

31st May

Additional Learning Needs Education

Sheena Smith -Carers Support Worker- VOCAL

7th June

Understanding Challenging Behaviour

Helen Downey - Psychologist - NCH Gilmerton Road Project

14th June

Things we Have to Deal With

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

21st June

Effective Communication

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

28th June

Looking After Yourself

Jane Greenacre - Training Officer - VOCAL

“Very beneficial - anyone who cares for a child with special needs can learn something from this”

