

# Learning for Carers Grants

In September 2012, Skills for Care launched a programme of 'Learning for Carers' grants. It was the intention with this programme to better support the learning needs of carers, working with organisations that support them to understand what would be of benefit to carers, therefore helping them to receive the recognition of their learning needs that may go un-noticed.

Within some Carers Centres and through a network of carers services (both Voluntary sector and Local Authority led), there are some opportunities for carers to access information and learning. These can increase carers skills to care well or are seen as having wider benefits to carers lives. This learning can be both practical (e.g. first aid, benefits) or focus on the carers own needs (e.g. coping with stress, getting a balance between caring and your own life). These topic areas are appreciated by carers as helpful to their role. Therefore, Skills for Care's one off programme of 'Learning for Carers' grants aimed to contribute to the provision of just this sort of learning for carers.

The forty nine projects funded by these grants have been an overwhelming success, with clear impact on carers lives being demonstrated. Below are four case study examples across a range of organisations showing how the grants have been used to better carers lives.

# Case study

## AWARE

Airedale and Wharfedale Autism Resource (AWARE)

AWARE is a parent-run group supporting families with children on the autistic spectrum by offering information, advice & opportunities to share experiences and learn from each other. They lobby for better services by working with the local authorities & the NHS to promote parents' views in determining services required and aim to promote public awareness of autism.

Having not heard of Skills for Care before, AWARE applied and were awarded a grant aimed at;

- **Parents /carers having continued and greater access to autism-related information and training, to gain support from the training and share experiences and information with other parents.**

Many of AWARE's members say they really value the opportunity to meet other people in a similar situation to themselves and find strength and comfort in knowing they are not alone. They are enabled to better understand and care for their children/young people in the long term through this sort of learning. AWARE's children/young people show increased independence and personal development through their parents being better able to understand and support them.

Working in partnership with National Autistic Society and Autism EPIC, and using the Learning for Carers grant, AWARE delivered a number of workshops to parent carers.

Margaret Nash, AWARE, explains that *"The areas of learning we chose are those that affect all our children/young people and those where the parents often feel least confident. There is little training out there and many of our members, some of whom are single parents with more than one child on the autistic spectrum, are unable to access it because of their childcare commitments at the beginning and end of the school day and some parents cannot afford the fees charged."*

AWARE have offered the following courses;

- **Behaviour and the Sixth Sense**
- **Solution Focused Therapy**
- **Teen Life**
- **Managing Anger**
- **Supporting Siblings**

Feedback from parents has been overwhelmingly positive.

*"Really helpful getting professional help and advice in bite-sized chunks and opportunity to share problems and ideas with other parents and professionals."*

# Case study

## INS

Integrated neurological services (INS)

Having not heard of Skills for Care before, INS applied and were awarded a grant. INS are Integrated Neurological Services (INS), a charity based in Twickenham established in 1993 to provide on-going rehabilitation and support to people in the local community with long term, chronic or degenerative neurological conditions, such as Stroke, Parkinson's Disease (PD) or Multiple Sclerosis (MS). INS also offers advice, training and support to their carers. Their project aimed to:

**Improve understanding of the condition of the person cared for and ability to cope with the emotional impact. Build confidence, wellbeing and skills to perform a caring role.**

They aimed to do this by running a number of short courses. The courses were;

- **Taking Back Control for Carers:** A 3-part group programme designed to help carers understand and deal with the emotional issues that frequently arise for carers of people with neurological conditions: stress, depression, anxiety and frustration
- **Fit Club for Carers:** This is a programme for carers to use specialist equipment at INS, following an individually-tailored programme of exercises, under the supervision of a rehabilitation assistant, to improve or maintain their strength and fitness and to benefit from the positive effect on mood that exercise can provide. Two six week courses were run.
- **Back care:** group training on back care was provided during one of the monthly Carers' Mutual Support Groups
- **Communication difficulties sessions:** training was provided during one of the monthly Carers' Mutual Support Groups

Retired teacher Gillian Ware cares for her husband Chris and found the fitness classes offered by INS helpful.

*"The first thing they did was take our blood pressure which was for most of us was sky high. It does take a quite a toll physically as my husband is 6ft 4 and weighs 15 stones. We started off very gently doing a lot of work stretching and built up to circuits. I came away afterwards feeling really good because you do get a buzz when you're exercising."*

All the courses and sessions have been well received by carers.

*"Meeting other carers helps enormously. It makes me realise that I am not alone with the problems and am actually not having to cope with major problems as some do."*

*"(I have learnt to) Organise my time to definitely set aside time for own activities. Setting aside my own time has been suggested but I have allowed it to be eroded."*

All participants reported an increase in knowledge and confidence after attending the back care and the communications difficulties session.

Fundraising Manager at INS Belinda Cannosa, said *“This has been a very useful partnership with Skills for Care. We very much hope you will continue this sort of support.”*

**For a short film clip demonstrating the project, please click here <http://goo.gl/WYXkh>**

# Case study

## Carers Lewisham

Carers Lewisham's role is to identify, educate, represent, empower, support and nurture Carers. The services they provide include advice, information, advocacy, case work, counselling, training, breaks and support to people who care unpaid for friends and/or relatives who have long term mental or physical illness or disabilities or who are elderly and frail, including children with caring responsibilities.

The project aims were;

**For carers to feel better able to cope with their caring responsibilities. To build confidence and feel less isolated.**

They did this by using the Learning for Carers grant to offer a number of sessions on;

- **Relaxation**
- **First aid**
- **Assertiveness**
- **Back care**
- **Coping strategies**
- **Social networking**

Around 100 carers took part across all these learning workshops.

When asked whether the session had helped them cope better with caring, 94% agreed. When asked if they felt that the help from the session has helped them take better care of themselves and their own health, 100% agreed. Carers also agreed that the session helped them to feel less alone in their caring role ( 88% ), whilst 94% reported that it would help them carry on caring.

*"I will spend few minutes for myself of relaxation"*

*"I felt lighter after. "*

*"It will help with my caring abilities, I'm much more confident. "*

*"Opportunity to keep up-to-date, and will be able to communicate with professionals using emails. "*

*"Developed positive attitude and enable to challenge difficult situation. "*

Alex Reichert, of Carers Lewisham said *"Carers find themselves on their caring role very often without any warning and training, and many struggle to cope with it, therefore training like the ones we provided with your funding could be a lifeline for many carers, and also have an indirect benefit on the person they care for. In our organisation's case, we can't ever provide as many courses as we wish, as our core funding barely covers staff salaries, therefore the fund provided to developed specific training sessions and workshops is very much appreciated by us and the carers registered with us. "*

# Case study

## ESCAPE

ESCAPE Family Support is a community led response, founded in 1995 by Janet Murphy MBE (our current Chief Executive), after her daughter died from drug poisoning, as it was apparent to Janet there was nowhere to access appropriate support for carers and family members affected by substance misuse. ESCAPE operates throughout Northumberland and seeks to improve the lives of carers by providing a range of specialist support services including telephone support, advice, information, advocacy, comprehensive carer assessments, personalised care plans, 1:1 support, counselling, support groups, respite opportunities as well as providing specific support for kinship carers, those with a family member involved in the criminal justice system and those bereaved by substance use.

Supporting carers of those who misuse substances, ESCAPE used their grant with the aims of **providing a training programme for carers of substance misusers**. They aimed for;

- **Carers to have increased confidence at dealing with situations to do with caring for someone who misuses substances**
- **Carers to have increased knowledge around substance misuse issues**

Carers reported a variety of benefits from attending the training provided as part of this grant. Carers felt that their knowledge increased and they felt better prepared to deal with situations that may arise. Carers felt more aware of ensuring they take care of themselves and put in boundaries with their loved one and reduce enabling behaviours. Carers attending the groups also felt that the peer support available within the group was really beneficial and enjoyed the atmosphere created. Some carers visibly increased in confidence by attending the course and were able to benefit from social integration with others in similar situations.

*"Learnt a lot from how user may be feeling to how to deal with him. "*

*"I am more confident but I still need to work on being stronger. "*

*"I have learnt to be more positive and do more for myself. "*

*"I have more energy. " "I am stronger. " "It has helped me to cope better. "*

*"I have learnt to stop enabling my son. "*

*"Feel much more positive and able to apply lessons to self. " "I am more positive instead of negative all the time. "*

*"I have enjoyed this awareness course and have learnt quite a bit - very good. "*

*"I'm glad I've been alerted to the possible problems that can be associated with substance abuse. "*

*"I have learnt lots of new points about drugs - stuff I was completely unaware of. "*

**Janet Murphy MBE, Chief Executive Officer, ESCAPE Family Support.**

*"We were delighted to be awarded the grant from Skills for Care to provide training requested by the carers we are currently supporting. The feedback we have received from carers demonstrates the invaluable impact this grant has had on the lives of carers affected by substance misuse as the training has helped carers to develop lifelong skills to improve their ability to cope with the challenges facing the. "*