

Caring with Confidence

Seb Fischer, Manager at VOCAL, gives us a look at 'Expert Carer' training programmes.

Between 5 February and 18 March 2008, MS Society Scotland and VOCAL (Voice Of Carers Across Lothian) in Edinburgh will join forces to run another training course 'Caring for someone with Multiple Sclerosis'. In seven weekly sessions carers discuss different aspects of caring, are introduced to agencies which can offer services and support, and learn effective ways in which they can look after their own health and well-being.

This is the third MS Carer course of its kind in VOCAL's 'Expert Carer' training programme, following successful ones run in 2005 and 2006.

'Expert Carer' training offers learning opportunities for unpaid carers in a mutually supportive environment. Carers share and build on their own caring expertise, by gaining further knowledge and confidence from health professionals and other carers in similar situations.

Courses help carers identify and access additional support from a range of agencies, improve their ability and confidence to self-manage their caring situation and as a result improve the quality of life for themselves and those they care for.

Caring with Confidence is the title of an independent study, published on 30 October 2007, which evaluated the views of a random sample of 550 carers who participated in VOCAL's 'Expert Carer' training over the past two years. Peppered with over 80 overwhelmingly positive quotes from carers and practitioners, the report provides powerful evidence of the importance of carer training. Here are just a few...

"You can't measure how much being with others in a similar situation boosts confidence."

"Until I attended these courses I thought I was alone. The course gave me a sense of proportion and comradeship."

"You realise that you know more than the doctor or the nurse - that gives you confidence."

"It has made me aware I need to watch my own health too."

"I now sleep better and do not feel so guilty when I need a rest."

'Expert Carer' training has been so successful that the Scottish Government is recommending all NHS Boards to develop course programmes in their own areas. At present, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers with Scottish Government funding are running a 2-year pilot in the NHS Lothian area to gather more evidence of the scope and success of these training programmes and measure positive outcomes for carers.

**For details of "Caring for someone with MS",
please contact Karen Howe, Training Coordinator
for MS Society Scotland on 0131 335 4050
karen.howe@mssocietyscotland.org.uk
For further details of all 'Expert Carer' training
opportunities, please contact Jane Greenacre,
Training Officer at VOCAL-0131 622 6666,
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