



*Joan Lee at Care Connect is managing a project that is being supported by European Social fund and Job Center Plus in Cornwall to research and develop support packages for Carers who are wanting to take up learning opportunities or return to work.*

In the planning stages of the project we identified the need to include some training that would help carers to build on their existing experience and skills, to develop confidence and start to explore their future options. *Learning for Living* seemed the ideal resource for achieving these needs and objectives. After incorporating *Learning for Living* within our programme we started promoting the course and have used carers support groups throughout Cornwall to help do so; we also have one of the local colleges whose supporting us in promoting the course.

Once we began receiving expressions of interest, we held a series of information sessions in order for our learners (mainly aged in their 40s and 50s who have not undertaken formal learning for many years) to overcome any initial apprehensions. The sessions gave carers the opportunity to find out more about the course, to meet the course tutor, and also gave us an opportunity to discuss their experience of learning and their support needs, so we could really tailor what we were doing to meet carer needs as closely as possible.

We now have 22 learners working towards the qualification 3 of whom are studying online. We are working with the remaining learners in small groups to meet their diverse range of support needs. 12 learners are attending structured group learning sessions on a weekly basis and the remaining 7 are using the online resource and attending fortnightly sessions to have contact with other learners and receive support from a tutor with the work required for assessment."

Our plan is to deliver the programme in 3 different ways:

1. Exclusively an online Learning opportunity
2. Structured group learning sessions on a weekly basis
3. A mixture of 1&2 for those who want some contact with carers but also feel comfortable using the online learning resource. Carers will come together on a less frequent, but regular basis to have contact with other learners, and to get support from a tutor.

The positive experiences and effects for Carers taking this course is quite striking in many cases. We are not only seeing many individual carers grow in confidence and competence, many of them are achieving quite remarkable personal goals. One Carer for example had not driven for 7 years prior to this course but was so motivated to attend her sessions she has got back in the car again to drive herself to them. Another who has always seen herself as stupid because she was told this so often by teachers and parents can at last see that she is not stupid, she recognises that she is a learner who responds well to visual materials and is devising her own ways of supporting herself as she goes through the course! The benefits and rewards of this course can be far reaching and rewarding for tutors and Carers alike. It has come at such a good time in relation to the increasing attention to the needs of Carers it has to be given the support it deserves throughout the country."