



*Jill Shepherd is a Tutor at the Assessment Centre for Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) in York. ACVO is committed to the delivery and of high quality development, assessment and accreditation opportunities based on national occupational standards in a format that is relevant and compatible with the needs of the voluntary and community sector. Jill tells us about her experiences with Learning for Living...*

Our initial objectives were to offer personal development, learning stimulus, validation of skills and, equally importantly, an opportunity for social contact. We also wanted to provide our carers with a challenge. *Learning for Living* seemed to meet all of our aims.

The benefits provided to our carers as a result of undertaking the course are almost too numerous to mention! *Learning for Living* has increased self awareness and self esteem, set personal challenges and improved IT skills particularly where there had been no skills at all - one student had never held a mouse when she began the course. In some cases, working through the content has brought personal issues to a head.

Giving carers the opportunity to meet in a group environment has, for some, greatly improved social contact with other carers in a similar/same situation. The course also provides a chance for carers to use existing, underused skills (such as those of an ex teacher).

Carers needs, as expressed through the course, were much more wide ranging and deeply felt than first anticipated. Therefore it seemed very important to support people in expressing their needs, and in helping where we could. Tutors found this process challenging, and of course satisfying where they were able to help.

Our carers found the overall online learning experience a satisfying challenge. We most enjoy being able to support people who are so isolated and really need something interesting and challenging to stimulate them.