



## Carer Aware

*Dudley Council*

### What is Carer Aware?

Carer Aware is an e-learning course for staff, carers and the general public to inform participants of the role of carers and their rights, and services to support carers in Dudley.

### The problem

There are currently over 35,000 carers in Dudley, a figure that rises every year. Dudley Council realised there were more carers out there who may not realise they could ask for help, and recognised that carers in their area needed more help to access information and services to support them.

A training course already existed to train staff and raise awareness about carers, however this type of training was expensive and only a limited number of people could be trained at any one time. And whilst the training course received great feedback from staff who had attended, carers themselves were missing out on vital information that could help them.

### The solution

In July 2010, the Department of Health provided a grant to West Midlands' local authorities to help improve the training they offered to carers. Dudley had already developed the initial concept of an online training method and used the funding to carry out their plans.

Christine Rowley, Carers Co-ordinator at Dudley Council says: *The online course is available 24 hours a day, and is designed not just for staff but for members of the public, as well as people from organisations including health, voluntary sector, social care and other local authorities.*

*The course helps carers to realise what their role is and how they can get support, as well as helping people who provide local services to understand how they can better support the carers they meet on a day to day basis. It also provides links to local and national websites and can be visited time and time again, rather than existing as a one off resource.*

When staff in local organisations have completed the course, they become 'carer aware' accredited and can display a sticker in their building.





This lets carers know that staff are aware of their needs, and are trained to support them and provide information to help them in their caring role. Thirteen local libraries across the borough were the first places to become 'carer aware'. Staff in other local agencies and GP surgeries have since followed suit.



### Who was involved?

The course was developed in collaboration with the learning and development team at the council and the Dudley Carers Network. Council staff, carers groups and local library staff tested the resource as it was developed

to make sure it was easily usable and the language was appropriate.

It helps to raise awareness of the role of a carer and also helps to clarify in people's minds the difference between paid care staff and a person who is caring for a friend or family member. Feedback has been excellent so far.

Since implementing the course in 2010, 40 other local authorities have been able to adopt the course and implement it in their area. Its simplicity has meant that no organisation has needed to amend it, other than to update with local information. This makes it very cost effective and easy to implement.

Carer Aware is already live at local authorities in Wolverhampton, Telford, Swindon, Cornwall, Norfolk and East Sussex. The course will also soon be live in Solihull. At Dudley, over 400 staff have already completed the course.

**NHS Live** has hundreds of other improvement stories like this from all over England, including many stories related to carers. To find out more visit [www.nhslive.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslive.nhs.uk)

Staff say they feel more confident in telling carers and the public what's available. Carers say they feel much better prepared for their role and more confident in approaching others to find out what support is available to them.

As an online resource, the course allows the local authority to train large number of people, saving a large amount of money on training costs. Every time someone accesses the course, the training cost for the organisation is reduced. It also allows people to work at their own pace.



The course has been recognised by SCIE as good practice and included in the Skills for Care Training Manual Caring Matters.

### Next steps

Dudley have now secured more funding to develop a new online training course – The Essential Guide to Adult Social Care. This resource will help individuals and organisations to understand the new personalised approach to adult care. Christine says: *'It will help people through the maze of services available. Lots of websites have lots of different information, but*

*there is no journey as such. People need to know who they can contact for advice and support.'*

### Key learning points

Carers need to be involved locally to ensure that the course reflects the needs of the local area, and it's vital that links to more information are accurate and working properly. People need to feel confident they are linking through to information that will help them or they'll become disengaged with the course.

An accreditation scheme is also important. As well as building recognition for the course, it recognises that staff have taken the time to improve their learning and gives confidence to members of the public that they can find support where they need it.

### More information

Here are some useful links to more information about Carer Aware.

[Carer Aware](#)

[Social Care Institute for Excellence](#)

[Dudley Carers Network](#)

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