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CARE AND CARING NETWORK @OU

This week (10-16 June 2019) is Carers Week

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. (Carers Trust 2017)

There are 7.6 million carers in the UK and 3 in 5 of us will be a carer at some stage in our lives. Caring affects us all – including OU staff and students.

The Care and Caring Network @OU promotes carers' rights within the Open University and provides links to information, advice and guidance.

The network is made up of 3 sub-groups:

- ✓ Carer research
- ✓ Staff who care
- ✓ Student support and widening participation

In this newsletter we have gathered together an update on some of the projects and activities that are going on across the University and further afield.

Network News

We are delighted to announce that the network has spearheaded a carers scholarship scheme which will enable 50 carers of any age in any part of the UK to study towards an OU undergraduate or postgraduate qualification up to a max value of £18k! The scheme will start in 2020. It has been carefully developed in consultation with our partners and our ambassadors and has been endorsed by the Department of Health and Social care. Our partners are The UK's 2 leading carers organisations – Carers Trust and Carers UK. Our ambassadors are both eminent and highly respected figures in the carer policy field - Dame Philippa Russell and Professor David Croisdale-Appleby

Carer Research

This group continues to expand and now has 25 members with an interest in carer research from across the university.

This year, three members have published a paper on care and surveillance in the new International Journal of Care and Caring. Six members are conducting a Research and Scholarship funded project which is the first stage of a two-phase project which will form part of a cluster of associated HWSC scholarship projects investigating how specific personal challenges affect student study, persistence and retention.

The research aims are twofold:

1. To explore how students who are carers experience and manage OU study
2. To provide a sound foundation for further University-wide research in this area.

Another member is conducting a workshop to explore doing systematic reviews as identified by research group members with a view to producing publications and developing bids.

Contact Mary.Larkin@open.ac.uk for more information

Staff Who Care

Staff wellbeing day 13 June

For staff and student carers on campus there's a support session for carers during National Carers Week at 10am.

Details of all planned events are at:

http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/humanresources/news/staff-wellbeing-day-13-june

Peer Support

Caring for someone can be hard, mentally and physically.
We want to affirm our Established Carer Positive status – can carers at the OU support other carers?

We'd like to set up a support group so that carers can talk to someone who understands their situation. Contact Lesley McGrath if you'd like to share your experiences with others.

Employers for Carers

Mary Kellett, the Acting Vice Chancellor, has agreed that the OU can join Employers for Carers. This organisation supports employers in supporting carers – the OU is only the 4th University to join!

Student Support and Widening Participation

This group has been very busy recently and a lot has been achieved. We have been successful in adding information on supporting students who are carers to Tutorhome. We have invited OUSA to join the group and they have put out a call for feedback from students. We have also been focusing on the implementation of recommendations of the OU Wales project and the Going Higher for Student Carers award and have set up two working groups to take these forward (see below).

The **Student Carers Working Group** was established as a task and finish group of the Care and Caring Network's Widening-Participation sub-group. The purpose of the working group is to progress recommendations made from the Welsh Carers project, which aimed to increase the number of students who declared as carers and develop resources, in the form of a Carers Pack, that could be despatched to student carers. Recommendations of the project related to upscaling the resources for use across the University, making them available via Tutorhome and Studenthome. It was also recommended that a carers flag be made available on VOICE to enable effective support to be offered throughout the student journey, without the need for students to continually declare their carer status. The Carers Pack has been reviewed against each of the four nations, and four separate packs are available for respective students, soon to be available on Studenthome and Tutorhome. Members of the Student Carers Working group are liaising with the VOICE team in relation to the Carers flag. Subsequent actions within the recommendations will be progressed following successful implementation of the Carers flag which will include exploring options for alternative exam arrangements for students who are carers, similar to the approach taken for disabled students. For further information on the Student Carers working Group, please contact Ceri Wilcock.

Going Higher for Student Carers

Carers Trust Scotland run an award scheme for universities that identify and support students with caring roles. We have formed a working group to take forward the Open University's application on a four-nation basis. The OU already meets many of the criteria for the award. The work being done to implement the recommendations of the OU Wales carers project will help us achieve even more of them. The working group is focusing on the need for a Student Carers Policy. We are currently going through the process for developing an OU policy and have produced a stakeholder map and communications plan, with an equality statement in the pipeline. The draft policy will then go out to student consultation before being put before the relevant committees. We hope to have the policy in place in early 2020.

Find out more about Going Higher.

For more information, or to get involved in the group, contact co-chairs: Gill Ryan and Wendy Fowle

News from Scotland

To mark Carers Week, OUiS will have a drop-in session for staff to update them on the work of the Care and Caring Network and raise awareness of carers. We are sending out a mailing to Associate Lecturers to signpost them to the new information on Tutorhome. We'll also be tweeting about Caring Counts, Carer Positive, Going Higher and other carer-related activity by the university. Watch out for these @OUinScotland

Case study

Ann is team coordinator of a project that supports carers of people with mental health issues and provides training for carers from across Glasgow. They use the *Caring Counts* reflection course on OpenLearn Create with people who have been caring for a long time.

"The course is never the same twice, as we adapt it to each group to make sure everyone can access it. We run it with groups of 4-6 people over three

sessions, one week apart. Between sessions, people reflect on what we've covered. As we go through the course, we identify what people are interested in, and signpost to resources on OpenLearn. Mental health carers can experience social isolation due to stigma and because the person you care for takes up all your time, energy and head space. Delivering the course this way encourages peer support and fosters relationships. The group gives them confidence, builds resilience and provides a supportive environment where they can be honest about the good and bad times without judgement. **We've seen transformations in people, and in a very short time."**

Keep in touch

Keep in touch

Join our Yammer group
Check out our intranet pages
Join our network – contact Mary Larkin

Support organisations

Carers Trust
Carers UK