'Learning for carers at The Open University’ programme

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1. Context

1. Caring can be all-consuming and take a toll on health, finances, relationships, education and careers

2. Impacts on education e.g. GCSE attainment, increased likelihood of being NEET for six months or more and four times as likely to drop out of college/university than other students

3. Impacts on employment e.g. having a caring role leads to:
   - 2.6 million people per annum in the UK giving up work ‘in order to care’
   - 2.1 million having reduce their hours ‘in order to care’
   - being unable to progress careers and undertake further study
2. Carers and the OU

• Our open access entry policy means that carers’ prior educational attainment is not a barrier to study

• Research shows that the design of our online learning resources and courses offers the most flexible way for carers to study around caring commitments

• A strong and ongoing commitment to meeting carers’ needs

• Carer bursaries of £250 to help with study-related costs

• Our Carers Scholarship Fund (CSF) provides funding for a full OU qualification for up to 50 carers each year
3. Benefits of OU study for carers

Improves wellbeing and opportunities to have a life outside caring

Why study?

- Be part of a study group
- Skills for caring
- Skills for life
- Prove that you can ‘do’ university
- Indulge your fascinations
- Keep the brain cells alive
- Improve employability
- Develop different interests
- “Me time”
4. The ‘Learning for carers at The Open University’ programme

- exploring potential for international roll out
- working on national roll out
- supports carers’ wellbeing and the upskilling/maintenance of their educational /employability currency
- a stepping stone to a higher education qualification
- the OU’s model of quality, flexible, distance learning higher education and bespoke carer support is central
- enables all carers to engage with a lifelong learning journey at no cost to themselves
- addresses many of the issues that prevent carers from accessing and remaining engaged with higher education
5. Key ingredients

- free bitesize online learning
- face-to-face and online support
- information, tools and confidence to go on to study for a formal qualification

Learning and reskilling pathways
6. Open Learn resources

- Certificates and badges awarded – can be used as a route into OU qualifications
- Range from 2 to 24 hours
- Pitched at different levels
- 1000s of freely accessible educational and skills resources
- Many courses relevant to carers
- Widely range of courses
- An established launch pad into formal study
7. The Guide

Thought you didn’t have the time to study, or complete personal/professional development? Well, here’s your opportunity - whatever your educational background you can start a learning journey with Open University (OU) OpenLearn courses, working at a pace that will enable you to balance caring and studying and at no cost to yourself.

OpenLearn courses range from 2 hours to 24 hours in length, are pitched at different levels to suit your learning need, presented in ‘bite-size’ chunks to help you easily fit studying in short time slots into your daily schedule, have no start or finish date and most of the courses have no formal entry requirement. They are also fully accessible which means that, for example, alternative formats are available for people with learning difficulties.

There are a lot to gain from taking up study. Despite the challenges they face, carers have described how studying at the OU improves their wellbeing. Other benefits of OU study are:

- Skills for life
- Proven that you can ‘do’ university
- Be part of a study group
- Develop different interests
- Keep the brain cells alive
- Improved employability
- Skills for career

Start your journey by creating your free OpenLearn account by clicking on the OpenLearn link on the left-hand side of the OpenLearn web page [https://www.open.edu/openstudy] where you will gain full access to a range of features that are unique to OpenLearn. Your OpenLearn profile will enable you to track your progress and join the growing community of learners.

You are now ready to start your learning journey, which is set out on a paper version of this guide, please now work online.

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This Guide has been jointly produced by the Open University and the Carers Centre Tower Hamlets. We wish to thank the Carers Centre Tower Hamlets Carers Wellbeing Academy and its Carers Wellbeing Champions who contributed to its development and piloting. The Open University is the University of Choice for care students and those who wish to improve the wellbeing of unpaid carers through education.
Your learning at the Open University

To get started, go to the Open Learn website and log in to your account.

Would you like to refresh your study skills before you start an OpenLearn course?

**YES**
- Check out ‘Am I ready to be a distance learner?’

**NO**

Would you like to start with a course related to your caring role?

**YES**
- A number of free courses focused on the caring role to investigate including: Physical activity for health and wellbeing in the caring role Caring for adults

**NO**

Do you know what topic areas you would like to study?

**NO**
8. Rolling the programme out

• developing a trainer guide for nominated members of staff at carers centres

• cascading training sessions for nominated staff at carers centres

• a leading UK carers organisation which has affiliated carers centres and extensive networks across the UK will promote the programme

• exploring how it can be adapted for use in other countries

• Carers landing page (articles, courses, project content)
THANK YOU and QUESTIONS PLEASE!