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## Care and caring network@OU news bulletin 2018

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How to cite:

Larkin, Mary and Hudson, Gayle (2018). Care and caring network@OU news bulletin 2018. The Open University.

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Version: Version of Record

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# CARE AND CARING NETWORK @OU



**This week (11-17 June) 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 over 6.5 million carers in the UK and 1 in 3 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** is a formal corporate network for knowledge exchange around care and caring, the promotion of carers rights within the Open University and the provision of information, advice and guidance in carer-related policy development.

The network is made up of 4 subgroups:

- curriculum development for carers
- 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

The OU's has been recognised as a Carer Positive Employer at the established level. Several members of the network contributed to the development of the application. More details below under 'News from Scotland'

## Curriculum development for carers

The Open University has some specific curriculum that may be of interest to carers. Carers are likely to be people who regularly do not put their own interests or needs first as they often prioritise the needs of the person they are caring for. We know that learning not only improves knowledge and education but it also improves health and well-being. The curriculum we offer encourages carers to think about their own needs more and covers subjects including family health, the caring role, legal responsibilities, adopting a person-centred approach to care, personal development and top tips for looking after themselves.



We also link to some resources offered by one of our social partners, Leonard Cheshire Disability, who, as well as being the largest charity working to support people with disabilities, also have a strong focus on providing advice, support and resources for carers.

If you know of any curriculum developments or existing curriculum offered by the OU that we can link to please do contact me.

[Julie.Gowen@open.ac.uk](mailto:Julie.Gowen@open.ac.uk)

## Carer research

This group continues to welcome new members with an interest in carer research from across the university. We receive regular updates on funding opportunities and in addition to collaborating on research projects, members meet and work together to share ideas and write papers. This year, three members have submitted a paper on care and surveillance to the new International Journal of Care and Caring. Another member has published a paper on a scoping review of carer-related knowledge and evidence (<https://rdcu.be/QCGy>).



The Carer research group is now recognised as one of School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care's research groups and as such as the same Terms and Conditions as the other research groups in the School.

Contact [Mary.Larkin@open.ac.uk](mailto:Mary.Larkin@open.ac.uk)

## Staff who care

## Staff wellbeing day on 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 at:  
<http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/human-resources/news/staff-wellbeing-day-13-june>

## Peer Support

**Caring for somebody can be hard - mentally and physically.** Let's affirm our Established Carer Positive status - can carers at the OU support other carers?

Perhaps meet up for a coffee or over lunch with somebody who understands your situation? Start an email support group? What do you think?

If you have any ideas about how we can help each other, contact me, share ideas for others to input into, and let's see what we can do.

**Contact:** [Lesley.McGrath@open.ac.uk](mailto:Lesley.McGrath@open.ac.uk)

## Policy updates and caring in the news

**22 May 2018:** [Prime minister calls on employers to do more to support aging workforce - PM's Science and Modern Industrial Strategy speech.](#)

**18 May 2018:** [Flexible working should be a 'day one' right for carers, say MPs:](#)

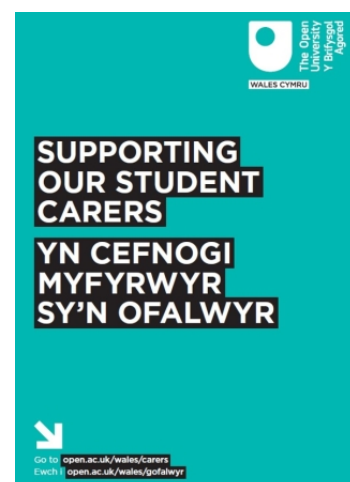
## Student support and widening participation

This sub group of the @OU Care and Caring Network focuses on the widening participation and student support activities across the University.

We are trying to bring together and share good practice and increase the support we offer our students who are carers.

As part of our Widening Access work in Wales, we have been running a pilot project to help

- find out more about the needs of student carers
- offer specific support to carers to improve recruitment, completion,



retention, progression and employability.

- feed findings from this project into the OU Care and Caring network and generally help to inform University wide policy around best practice and systems for supporting carers.

We have recently launched our [carers pack](#) for students in Wales.

## Online Forum for Students in Carers Week

From 11 - 17 June we are supporting the OU Student Association to run a forum for our student carers. We have a bank of people including student facilitators who have agreed to help out and we aim to provide a safe space for students to support each other over the week. They will also be able to post specific queries and gain advice and information from OU support staff.

### Contact:

[Gayle.Hudson@open.ac.uk](mailto:Gayle.Hudson@open.ac.uk)

[Gill.Ryan@open.ac.uk](mailto:Gill.Ryan@open.ac.uk)

## News from Scotland

### Caring about outcomes

On 30 May, we organised a knowledge exchange event called Caring about Outcomes which was attended by more than 50 practitioners from social work, health and carers centres around Scotland. Dr Joyce Cavaye (WELS) gave a presentation on her research related to caring – a temporal

model of the caregiving journey. Joyce noted that carers tend to seek support from services quite late in their caring journey and too often find it “a battle”. Claire Cairns of the Coalition of Carers gave an overview of the new Carers Act which came into force on 1 April this year. This is milestone legislation which redefines ‘carer’ more broadly than previously and gives all adult carers the right to a support plan focused on their personal outcomes. Claire also discussed that the legislation stopped short of giving carers the right to breaks from caring, but they must be considered in the support plan. This was followed by sessions on personal outcomes and short break provision for carers. Some carers centres are working with carers to find creative, carer-led solutions which challenge the idea of traditional respite. The event finished with a presentation on Caring Counts – an OpenLearn Create course co-produced with carers, carers organisations and the



OUIs. A link to the presentations will be added to the CCN@OU intranet site soon.

## Going Higher

During Carers Week, Gill Ryan will attend the Going Higher for Student Carers conference. The focus of the conference is the Going Higher award for Scottish universities and colleges, which evidences their commitment to identifying and supporting. The OU will be going through the process for this award over the coming months and will build on outcomes from OU Cymru's carers pilot project and other work across the network.

## Carer Positive

We are delighted to announce that the OU has recently been awarded Carer Positive established status. The CCN@OU team has worked with the HR department over the past year to apply for the established award, having gained engaged status in 2015. The [Carer Positive](#) award recognises employers who offer support to carers in their workforce, allowing them the flexibility they need to continue to care and work. While it is a Scottish Government funded initiative administered by Carers Scotland, it is being awarded to the whole Open University as the support provided to staff is available across the four nations. We are hoping to arrange the presentation of the award for 3 July when HR Director Fiona Roberts is in the OUIs in Edinburgh.

## Open Learning for Carers

At the Open Learning Champions network event in Glasgow on 6 June, one of our champions presented on how they are using the [Caring Counts](#) online course with carers. Anna Gibb (pictured) of the Glasgow Association for Mental Health (GAMH) described some of the goals and outcomes carers had achieved as a result of the course.

One learner, who has been caring for her son for over 20 years, took part in the Caring Counts course delivered offline with a group of carers. She struggled a wee bit initially as she was not used to thinking about herself. On completing the course, she has gained confidence and self-belief, and has achieved many of the outcomes she identified in her support plan.

*'The other people were so friendly. The course brought us all together, it opened an avenue for us to bond and it mentally helped us all. The course made me become aware of who I am and what I've achieved in the past. I felt really good after each class, like I was walking on air.'*

Another OUIs course [Caring Counts in the Workplace](#) was recently updated to reflect changes to carers' rights as a result of the Carers Act (2016) which came into force in April. This course is aimed at employers who support carers at work. Both courses sit on the OpenLearn Create platform.

## Start a conversation and keep in touch

[Join our Yammer group](#)

[Check out our intranet pages](#)

[Join our Facebook Group](#)

Join our network - contact [Mary.Larkin@open.ac.uk](mailto:Mary.Larkin@open.ac.uk)



### Support organisations

[Carers Trust](#)

[Carers UK](#)

### Forthcoming events



**11- 17 June** - Student Forum for Carers

**13 June** - [Staff wellbeing day](#)

**13 June** - Lunch and Learn session at OU in Wales -  
Work with carers

**16 June** - Workshop at AL Staff Development in  
Cardiff

focusing on supporting student carers

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