



# Conversations with Carers

## Barbra-Anne's Story



### **What does being an unpaid family carer mean to you?**

I care for my husband who has a physical disability and my daughter who has additional learning needs. I support my family by cooking their meals and assisting them to eat whilst checking my husband does not choke. I clean around the house and remind my family to bath regularly whilst supporting them to do this too. I provide emotional support for my daughter as well. I sometimes feel on my own and overwhelmed with everything that is happening.

### **How did you hear about the courses and what made you decide to join?**

I found out about the Care Start course from the volunteering team at Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn. I decided to join to keep my options open, improve learning and to keep my brain going. The new Care Start Plus course also fell on a day where I was able to leave my husband so I didn't have to worry about my caring responsibilities and could focus on my learning.

### **What skills and knowledge have you gained since doing the course?**

I have a better understanding about caring for elderly people. I have also had the opportunity to do a digital college course via the National Careers Service - I chose to do a substance misuse course and I passed! It's given me something positive to add to my CV.

### **How was the course helpful?**

I really enjoyed the course as it gave me time away from my caring responsibilities. I was able to build my friendship group and I see one of the other students with her nan and I always say hi. The people on the course give me emotional support too.

### **What were the biggest challenges you faced?**

I found the coursework and taught lessons difficult to keep up with as there were some complicated words but I now know that I can get extra support from members of the team on the new Care Start Plus course I'm doing, so I will meet with them regularly to keep up to speed.

### **What is your advice to others who might be considering joining the course?**

Just do it! You get to learn new skills, enhance your knowledge and understanding and this will all help in your day to day caring as you can use the skills with the person you care for. It definitely opens your eyes to the care you provide and how to improve it or meet new people.

### **What do you plan to do once you finish studying?**

I am going to continue volunteering at the hospital where I help on Leverington ward and support the St John Ambulance Library providing books to people in hospital. I will still be a trainer for St John Ambulance and the course has encouraged me to look into becoming a Bereavement Befriender for Sands Norfolk.