



# Conversations with Carers

## Michelle's Story



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

I support my nan who is in her nineties to give her the best quality of life she can have. My mum is a nurse so it also means that she is able to work without being worried about nan. I support nan with dressing and taking her out to improve her wellbeing. I try to do different activities with nan to keep her mind active and try to introduce new things when I can. Recently we've started bingo and this means that nan has a social life and a sense of community.

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

I found out about the first Care Start course when I went to the jobs fair at King's Lynn Job Centre. I was told that there was a care of the elderly qualification that I could gain. It was also a free course which was good for me because I could learn new things without a cost attached and the qualification would help me look after my nan. The Care Start Plus course was shared with me by the School of Nursing Studies team so now I am doing an employability skills qualification.

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

I've learned a lot about how people age and conditions such as dementia. I'm more mindful of things like how nan's skin is more fragile. I've always helped nan, but now I can use my knowledge of person centred care to support nan in a better way.

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

Studying at college gives me time to do something for me. I've made friends from different backgrounds and I've reconnected with someone I went to school with. The things I've learnt have helped me to support other people and I see the world differently. Visiting the dementia cafe also gave me ideas of new activities to do with nan to keep her mind active. The course has also taught me how to value others which has meant I value myself more too.

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

It's tough to juggle my role as a parent, and caring for nan with studying but it's important for me to take time to myself to grow and help me to develop a new career path. Getting back into education was tricky at first but working with others has been helpful and I go to see nan after my course ends.

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

Definitely give it a go. The team are supportive and will even show you around before you apply to make sure it's right for you. The classrooms are great and the technology that you use is really interesting. It's a very sociable and positive experience.

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

I'd like to do more learning to help me in the future. Whatever happens, I now feel like I am able to think about jobs I can do, rather than focusing on things I can't do which is really positive for me. Maybe something like art therapy to make use of my fine art degree or being a personal assistant so I can help others like I help nan.