



## Meet the carers

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## Meet the carers

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### Lesley



Lesley, 44, worked through the reflection course and an Open University access course. Reflecting on the skills she'd developed through her caring role, as well as successfully completing the OU course, gave her the confidence to continue studying. Knowing that she could manage to balance both caring and studying, she has now enrolled on a business studies course with her local university.

### Jade



Jade, who's 19, cares for her dad and is learning to be a youth worker. She left school and started training in childcare. She left her college course after the first year but knew she needed to do something else, so she decided to volunteer. Having gained experience of

youth work through volunteering she was then accepted onto a training course and later offered a paid job. She is part of a supportive group of young adult carers who learn, have fun together and share and support each other in their caring roles.

## Janet



(Library image)

Janet, 42, had not studied since her son was born. While caring for her son over the past 19 years she's learned a lot through volunteering at his school and also at SenseScotland. Now that her son is becoming an adult she has a little more time to herself and is in a position to consider what paid work she'd like to take on in the future. She is clear that she'd like to work in services for people with disabilities and would like to do further study to get there. Knowing that distance learning is the only practical way forward for her, Janet is studying Health and Social Care with The Open University and fitting that in around her caring and volunteering responsibilities, which can be a tricky juggling act at times.

## Dean



Dean, who's 28, cares for his mum, brother and grandad. He has decided that he'd like to find ways to develop his career. He knows that the better employment he finds, the better placed he is to support his family and fulfil his caring responsibilities. Combining his paid work and his caring role has been challenging and he has felt unsupported by his employer and trade union, despite being a workplace union representative. In order to progress his career, Dean has decided to reduce his work to four shifts a week so he can combine his employment with his Open University studying and his caring roles. He faces continuing challenges with his own health, but is clear and focused on his long-term aim to work in IT.

## Scott



Scott, who's 20, cares for his younger brother. He has been studying for four years since leaving school, starting in childcare and progressing to an HNC in social care. During this time he has decided he would prefer to work with young people with mental health issues, building on his own experience along with the knowledge gained through his studies. He has experienced personal and family difficulties, yet has managed to keep his study going. He says his young brother has kept him going and he's proud that he's able to manage his many roles and to gain the success he's achieved so far.

## Clair



Clair, 20, was a carer for her mum who passed away last year. Clair finished college and gained an HNC in photography. She's now working as a respite care worker while thinking about her next steps. She is keen to seize every opportunity she can to learn and develop, and is a part of a group of young adult carers who meet regularly to support each other through their experiences, learn together and have fun.

## Anna



Anna, 46, looked after her brother through his mental ill health before he had to accept professional help, while also caring for her own children and finding her way in a new country. Anna sought asylum in the UK from Congo DRC. She is proud of being able to cope.

## Gillian



Gillian, 54, is the training coordinator at her local carers centre. She works part time and is still very involved in caring for her family. She has three sons, two of whom have a genetic learning disability. Her first experience of returning to study was at her carers centre, where she completed an Open University course looking at 'make your experience count'. Completing this course gave her the confidence to apply to work at the centre. She has since completed a maths course as a personal challenge.

## Sandra



(Library image)

Sandra, 47, is a qualified nurse but because of her own health problems she isn't currently able to work in nursing. She cares for her teenage son who has Asperger's Syndrome. At first she felt selfish making time for herself to study psychology, but she found that it has given her the energy to cope with her demanding roles and has helped her to understand

her son's condition so that she is better able to support him. She has found that returning to study has been a crucial part of regaining her sense of herself.

## Hedar



(Library image)

Hedar, 45, has lived in Glasgow for five years, and cares for her father and her sister. Hedar and her family are refugees from Iraqi Kurdistan. Hedar's father and sister have disabilities and her father also has dementia. Hedar is their full-time carer. Hedar has chosen not to make use of external caring support currently and chose distance learning as a way to create time and space for herself while caring at home.

## Naomi



(Library image)

Naomi is 24 and a single parent. She left school at 15 with no qualifications and before having her daughter she worked in call centres. Her daughter, who has just started school, is visually impaired because she has albinism. Caring for her daughter has changed Naomi's ambitions and she has decided she would like to develop a career in social work.

## Katrina



Katrina, 49, is married and has five children, two of whom live at home. One of her sons has autism and attention deficit disorder. As her sons got older Katrina found she had more time for herself and knew she wanted to do something but wasn't sure what. She took up an Open University access course which she passed. This gave her the confidence to take a Return to Nursing Practice course at university, something she'd been thinking about for ten years but didn't think she'd ever manage to do. Two years on, she is working as a support worker in her local mental health unit. Once her nursing registration comes through she plans to apply for a job as a staff nurse.

## Acknowledgements

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