

Learning and development

Acquiring work related qualifications is just one reason why some carers choose to study. Sometimes the primary motive is to improve basic skills such as reading, writing and maths, sometimes to increase confidence or as a break from caring. In many cases, it is simply personal enjoyment.

Basic skills

Adults (16+) who are no longer in full-time, compulsory education can study for nationally recognised qualifications in:

- o Adult literacy;
- o Adult numeracy;
- o Information and communication technology (ICT);
- o English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Called 'Skills for Life' these courses are usually free to access and take place at convenient local venues. For more information contact **Wigan and Leigh College** or call the 'Get On Helpline'.

Get On Helpline ☎ 0800 66 0800 web link: <http://geton.direct.gov.uk/>

If you find that you struggle because of a lack of computer skills, you may want to check whether there is a 'UK Online' Centre near you. These centres provide free or low cost access to computers and the internet together with help and advice on how to use them.

UK Online Centres The Quadrant, 99 Parkway Avenue, Parkway Business Park, Sheffield S9 4WG ☎ 0800 77 1234 web link: www.ukonlinecentres.com

Learning for pleasure

Many schools, colleges and community centres in the borough run adult education courses but the choice can be bewildering. Your local Skills Shop

should be able to tell you about the various courses available and help you decide which is the best option for you.

Studying at a local centre can provide a break from caring and is a good way of meeting other people. However, if you find it difficult to get out there are some excellent distance learning courses available from providers such as the **Open University** and **National Extension College**. The Open University offers a wide range of over 600 certificate, diploma and degree courses and has produced a short booklet – Studying While You Care – which outlines the ways in which it can support students with caring responsibilities.

For those seeking a gentler and more informal introduction to the world of distance learning the BBC has also developed a number of online courses for adults covering topics such as basic skills, languages, first aid and gardening. Visit the website: www.bbc.co.uk/learning for more details.

Courses for carers

A few training and learning programmes are aimed specifically at carers. They include the Government's recently launched '**Caring with Confidence**' programme which is designed to build upon your knowledge and skills as a carer and promote wellbeing.

Self-development is also the theme of the 'Taking Care of the Carer' courses run by **Lancashire College**. These are three day residential courses which provide a break from caring as well as the opportunity to meet other carers.

Benefits and study

If you are planning to follow a course of **full-time** education you should seek advice first as this is likely to have implications for any benefits that you may be entitled to. For example, Carer's Allowance will stop if the amount of 'guided learning' (supervised study) you receive is 21 hours or more per week. There are also rules which prevent someone studying full-time from receiving means tested benefits (including Income Support) except in a few limited circumstances. The situation is made more complicated because there is no universal definition of 'full-time' and, for means tested benefits at least, this may depend upon the way the course is classified by the providing institution.

Help towards the cost of study

For many non-advanced and basic skills courses you will not have to pay tuition fees. Other courses may be offered free of charge to carers or those on a low income.

The Adult Learning Grant (ALG)

If you are aged 19 or over, attending college for a minimum of 12 hours a week and studying for a qualification equivalent to NVQ level 2 or NVQ level 3, you may be eligible for the 'Adult Learning Grant'. This is a weekly allowance, paid by the government, which is intended to help with the cost of returning to education. The amount that you receive will depend upon the level of income of you and your partner (if you have one) but the current maximum is £30 per week during term time.

If you are being paid certain 'out of work' benefits such as Income Support and Jobseekers Allowance you will **not** be able to get the adult learning grant. In some circumstances it can also reduce the amount of Housing or Council Tax benefit that you are entitled to. You **can** get the grant while claiming Carer's Allowance but only, of course, if the amount of guided learning you receive is less than 21 hours per week.

Other types of financial assistance

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers maintains an Educational Bursary Fund which is available to carers and former carers who wish to develop new skills. Most courses of study can also be funded as a break from caring through the 'Time for Carers' grant. If you want to extend your search the Educational Grants Advisory Service (EGAS) is an excellent point of contact. As well as maintaining an extensive database of trusts and charities that assist students EGAS (which is part of '**Family Action**') administers over 30 educational trusts itself.

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers ☎ 0844 800 4361 📧 info@carers.org
web link: www.carers.org

Time off for study

Under the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act, your assessment as a carer should take into account your wish to learn and help may be provided by the council to enable you to do this. There could also be opportunities to study flexibly or from home. Talk to your college or education provider if you want more information about these.

Caring with Confidence

**Carrwood Park
Selby Road
Leeds
LS15 4LG**

Telephone: **0800 849 2349** (09:00 to 17:00 Mon – Fri)

Email: cwc.info@caringwithconfidence.net

Web: www.caringwithconfidence.net

Who is the service for: **Caring with Confidence is free of charge to any unpaid carer in England aged 18 or over.**

Service details: **Caring with Confidence aims to make a positive difference to carers and the people who they care for by improving their health and well-being. We do this by providing free support sessions where carers can learn skills, get advice and information, talk and share experiences.**

Charges / membership: **None.**

Referral method: **Contact the freephone telephone number or visit the website to find out further information and how to register.**

Crossroads Wigan and Leigh

Tudor House Community Centre
8 Liverpool Road
Hindley
Wigan
WN2 3HU

Wheelchair access Disabled toilets Parking Public transport

Telephone: **07973257332** (Lynda Harrison) or **01744 612929** (Pauline Middlehurst) 09:00 to 17:00 Mon – Fri

Email: lynda.harrison@sthelenscrossroads.org.uk
pauline.middlehurst@sthelenscrossroads.org.uk

Web: www.crossroadswiganandleigh.org.uk

Who is the service for: **Unpaid carers of any age, who reside in the Wigan Borough.**

Service details: Crossroads Wigan and Leigh is a Big Lottery funded project which was launched in 2007 and will run for 5 years. The aim of the project is to give unpaid carers of all ages access to appropriate free training opportunities. Learning does not just mean studying for qualifications to improve job prospects. Learning can cover a whole range of self-development opportunities which can be linked to a hobby or interest, a new challenge or an unfulfilled ambition.

Referral method: **Self.**

Family Action

501-505 Kingsland Road
London
E8 4AU

Telephone: **020 7254 6251**

Helpline: **020 7241 7459** (Tues, Weds, Thurs 14:00 to 16:00)

Email: info@family-action.org.uk

Web: www.family-action.org.uk

Who is the service for: **Small grants to fund a range of essential needs for individuals and families on low incomes, particularly those living on benefits.**

Service details: **Small grants programme. Further details and application forms available on Family Action's website.**

Referral method: **All grant applications must be made by someone who knows the applicant in a professional capacity such as a social worker, health visitor or by a voluntary agency.**

Lancashire Adult Learning

**Lancashire College
Southport Road
Chorley
Lancashire
PR7 1NB**

Wheelchair access Disabled toilets Parking Public transport

Telephone: **01257 276719** (09:00 to 17:00 Mon – Fri)
Contact person: Donna Galway

Email: donna.galway@lancashire.gov.uk

Web: www.lancashirecollege.com

Who is the service for: **Unpaid, informal adult carers who care for a relative or friend in the community.**

Service details: Lancashire Adult Learning provides tailored short residential courses for carers. These courses are designed to enable carers to take a break from their caring situation. The courses are not only a chance to learn something new but also a valuable opportunity to enjoy social activities and some well earned time to yourself, and to enjoy the company of other carers. These specially designed courses include a challenging mixture of activities such as stress management, confidence building, complementary therapies, arts and crafts and gardening to rejuvenate the mind and body.

Charges / membership: The cost of a Taking Care of the Carer residential course is currently £150 to include all tuition / activities, meals and accommodation. Courses typically last for a weekend, from Friday evening to Sunday lunch.

Referral method: Self referral. Former carers whose caring role has ended within the past two years are also welcome to enroll.

National Extension College

**The Michael Young Centre
Purbeck Road
Cambridge
CB2 8HN**

Telephone: **0800 389 2839** (09:00 to 17:00 Mon – Fri)

Email: info@nec.ac.uk

Web: www.nec.ac.uk

Who is the service for: **Anyone who wants to study.**

Service details: **Distance learning courses including GCSEs, A-level, creative writing and more.**

The Open University

**351 Altrincham Road
Sharston
Manchester
M22 4UN**

Telephone: **0845 300 60 90** (Student Registration and Enquiry Service) 08:00 to 20:00 Mon – Fri, 09:00 to 17:00 Sat

Email: general-enquiries@open.ac.uk

Web: www.open.ac.uk/study

Who is the service for: **The Open University is for people who want to choose when and where they study. It's perfect for people with jobs, children, disabilities or commitments that make it hard to go to a fixed place.**

Service details: The Open University offers a flexible approach to learning which is particularly suitable for carers whose responsibilities mean they cannot attend conventional university. Our methods of teaching, learning and continual support help carers overcome the difficulties they have in accessing learning opportunities. All courses are at degree level, and students can study them over a number of years, gaining a degree or diploma at their own pace.

We have some short introductory courses called Openings which are particularly aimed at those wanting to try HE level study and also test how distance learning fits into their lifestyle. For more information on these Openings courses and all our provision, or to order our booklet 'Studying While You Care' please call us and speak to our friendly staff or visit our website.

Wigan and Leigh College

**PO Box 53
Parson's Walk
Wigan
WN1 1RS**

Telephone: **01942 761111** (Course Enquiries)

Web: www.wigan-leigh.ac.uk

Service details: As an adult you may be thinking about gaining new skills, enhancing your career prospects, updating your CV or just learning for pleasure.

We welcome adult students on all courses. If you haven't made your mind up yet, why not take the first step and come along for an informal chat with one of our advisors? We can help you find the best programme to suit your needs and also give you details about services available at the college.

Formal entry qualifications are not always necessary and we may be able to recognise skills and experience that you already have.

Drop-in callers are welcome, or you can simply arrange an appointment for more detailed advice and guidance if we are not available. Group discussions can also be arranged within the community.

Call 01942 761607 or 761438 for further information.