

Training for Carers in Northern Ireland Issues and opportunities



Northern Ireland

May 2001

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by Carers National Association (NI) and TOPSS (Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services) in October 2000 to examine current training provision available to carers in Northern Ireland, and to identify the extent to which it was available, accessible, and relevant to the needs of carers. The survey provides a qualitative snapshot of opinions on training provision across NI, with the views of 52 individual carers and 32 organisations reflected in the findings. The survey respondents are broadly based in terms of geography, age profile, relationships and support status.

In the analysis of carer opinions recognised difficulties are highlighted as the respondents confirm that caring, while for most is a “labour of love” is a task that brings many stresses and difficulties that clearly impact the quality of life for the carer. These difficulties which are highlighted in the body of the report, need to be addressed in conjunction with any actions that may be taken to improve training provision and accessibility.

In the analysis of carer views on training this report touches on many of the issues that effective carer support policy must consider. In addition to identifying that there is considerable confusion in the carer world on what training is and how it is delivered, this analysis has reflected a considerable demand for training that must be addressed by both the public and voluntary sectors if carer support is to be improved. In the body of the report we clearly define and prioritise the training that has been beneficial and the gaps that presently exist.

It must be stated however, that this report only touches on the key issues. The complexity of the carer world does not lend itself to a simple and all embracing analysis and improvement strategy. Indeed we show in the report that this work must stimulate further research focussed on the specific areas of carer need. Only by doing this will an effective and all embracing carer training strategy be developed covering the vast majority of carers in Northern Ireland.

In working to this objective one encouraging finding is worthy of special note, that most carers with whom we have spoken (77%) have confirmed a willingness to train others. Given that most carers learn by doing this, is an opportunity that needs to be fully integrated into any training strategy.

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In the report we have made numerous recommendations that should be considered by CNA and TOPSS. For ease of evaluation our findings and opinions are classified in the report under the following categories:

- communications;
- organisational change;
- development of effective training programmes;
- best practice initiatives;
- accessibility and
- use of technology.

In each of these areas we believe this report offers a practical mix of short term and long term impact findings that will improve the lot of the carer in Northern Ireland. We conclude our report by specifically highlighting all the recommendations that have a pure training dimension.

It is clear from this assessment that carer training provision in Northern Ireland is not adequately meeting the needs of carers.

More needs to be done now to lessen the already heavy burden on the carer community. Appropriate and accessible training offers the best way forward.

Taking the effort and commitment of the carer community for granted and not helping carers to deal with many of the problems that their dedication brings should not be tolerated. The statutory, voluntary and independent sectors all need to move and operate in a more co-operative and effective manner if this is to be achieved.

It is for others to assess whether the suggestions and recommendations in this report are sufficiently feasible and affordable to allow these changes to occur.

In closing this Executive summary it is important to acknowledge the contributions made by all the participants to this analysis of carers opinions on training. Their enthusiastic and often insightful support is appreciated and hopefully adequately reflected in this report.

PLEASE NOTE:

From October 1 2001 TOPSS functions transferred to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. You can contact NISCC at:

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