

Summary Evaluation Report of project 'Cariad'

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Swansea Carers Centre



**ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED**

About project Cariad and why it needs an evaluation

In 2013 The Swansea Carers Centre was awarded money from The Big Lottery for Project Cariad. The project lasted 3 years and undertook lots of activities that aimed to help carers to:

- Gain confidence and skills, and find a way to have some time to themselves.
- Reduce stress levels so that carers would feel better in themselves.
- Meet other carers so that they were less isolated.

At the end of the 3 years, Swansea Carers Centre worked with C.A.R.P. Collaborations, a research organisation, and asked them to do an evaluation. This was a piece of work that assessed whether Project Cariad had achieved these three outcomes for carers. The evaluators examined paper work, interviewed staff from other organisations who had worked with Swansea Carers Centre on project Cariad, and, of course, spoke to carers who had been involved in the project.

What did Project Cariad do?

Over the 3 years the project worked with 743 carers. Staff did lots of things to reach out to new carers- for

example, they had information stands, leaflets and used the media to let people know about the Cariad project. The project delivered 314 training sessions- nearly two and a half times more than was expected by



the funders! The sessions were varied and included arts and crafts, environmental activities, yoga and other physical well-being activities, practical first aid and managing stress.

Stress control was an important part of project Cariad so as well as



training about how to manage stress, the project also offered holistic therapies like massage and Craniosacral therapy. Over the 3 years 531 carers took part in activities to reduce stress. (The project originally thought they would work with 135 carers on reducing stress so there was far more work undertaken than was

first planned).

Cariad wanted to provide activities where carers could meet regularly but the staff didn't want these activities to end once the funding for the project had finished. They made plans to help

develop 6 carers groups, but by year 3 had helped in the development of 16 different groups run by carers for carers.

The groups were varied- some practiced stress control techniques such as mindfulness;

some were interest groups like a book club and beading group and others were involved in discussing and planning carer support activities.



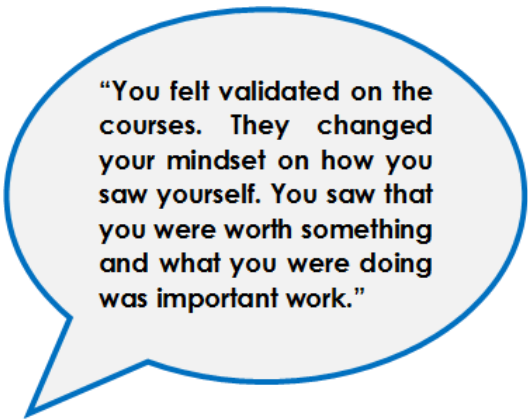
All of these activities were supported by volunteers. The project wanted to work with up to 30 volunteers, and by year 3, 20 volunteers were supporting Cariad's work and 11 of these volunteers were carers or former carers.

Cariad staff didn't work alone. They worked with other organisations, like social services and the health board, The

Alzheimer's Society and Carers Wales, to give the best service possible for carers. They also felt that staff in other organisations needed to understand the challenges that carers face and so they delivered awareness sessions to 495 people working in health, social care, other charities and the local council. The funders of the project agreed that there should be training provided for 160 staff, so project Cariad achieved far more than was expected.

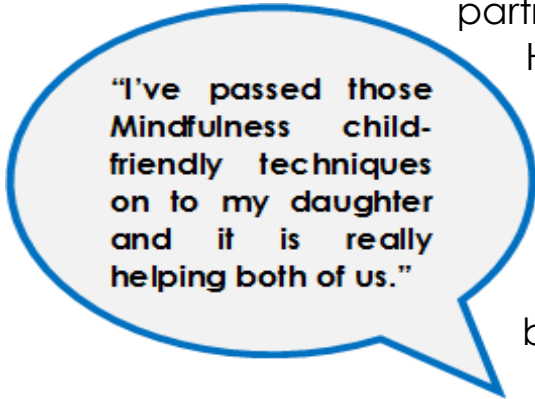
What impact did all the project activities have upon carers and former carers?

All participants enjoyed the courses and the holistic therapies, but they also found that they had an improved sense of well-being through being involved in Cariad activities. 80% of the people who had training said they felt they had gained confidence and self esteem from the courses and valued having had some "me" time.



"You felt validated on the courses. They changed your mindset on how you saw yourself. You saw that you were worth something and what you were doing was important work."

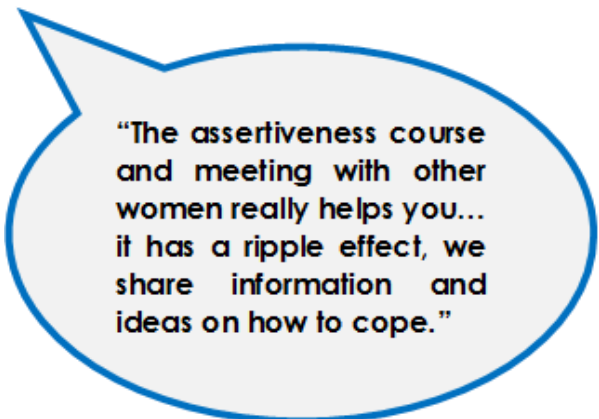
Around 75% of participants said they had lower stress levels after participating within project Cariad.



"I've passed those Mindfulness child-friendly techniques on to my daughter and it is really helping both of us."

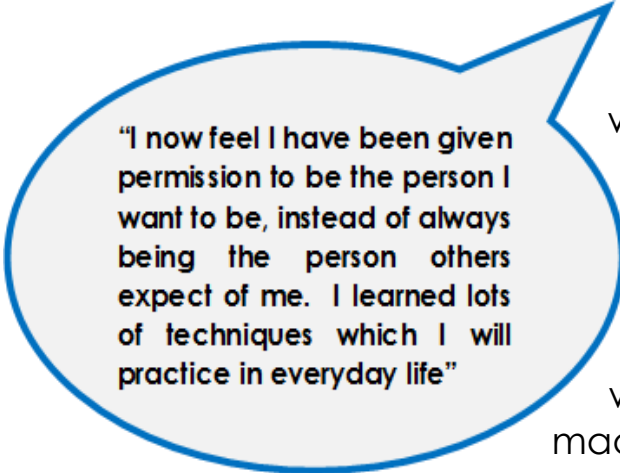
However what is important is that they also said they were coping better, even after the training had finished. Some participants taught stress management tips to their family members and found they had better relationships at home.

Participants really valued having the chance to meet other carers- they felt they didn't have to explain their circumstances and developed support to and from each other. This has reduced social isolation.



"The assertiveness course and meeting with other women really helps you... it has a ripple effect, we share information and ideas on how to cope."

Project Cariad has helped some carers develop new interests within their communities.



"I now feel I have been given permission to be the person I want to be, instead of always being the person others expect of me. I learned lots of techniques which I will practice in everyday life"

Some have gone on to undertake volunteering within the Carers Centre as well as with other organisations. Others have taken up more learning opportunities and hobbies whilst a few who were in a position to undertake paid employment have found work. The project has definitely made a big difference to carers.

What did project staff do really well?

Cariad staff have work hard and this is shown in the number of people they have worked with, the number of training sessions they have delivered and the number of holistic therapy sessions that have been available. But to do this they have shown particular expertise and skill in:

- Project planning- to get it all off the ground; thinking about how to improve the project each year and what may be needed to keep the project going after the funding finishes.
- Working with other organisations- The staff have involved more than 120 organisations in their work; including supermarkets, GP surgeries and local employers. They have also worked with the local media to raise awareness. This is on top of the awareness sessions for professionals.
- Involving carers- carers have been consulted about what courses they wanted, events, planning and delivering training. They have used all kinds of methods so that carers in different circumstances have been able to have their say.
- Communication- organisations and participants praised how staff have worked with them. Staff were very approachable and skilled at working with people.
- Getting additional funding- to provide more opportunities staff found small amounts of money for particular activities. For example, they got funding from Countryside Connections for green woodworking, basketry and bushcraft skills during the 'Love Your Countryside' Festival.

What happens now?

The carers groups are being continued as they are run by carers. Some have a small fee so they can afford to keep going and others may need some support from the Carers Centre to keep going (e.g. to pay for use of room or promotion or the groups).

Many organisations in the Swansea area now have better skills to support carers. But they may need future training to make these skills don't disappear with staff turnover.

Many carers have said they can cope better after Cariad so this will continue in the lives of individuals. However, some of these carers may still need support and advice at times from the Carers Centre.

The Carers Centre is looking for further funding so that these important parts of Cariad can continue.

