



ReachUK (Notts) – Reach Learning Disability



Introduction

Reach is a registered charity dedicated to supporting people with learning disabilities in Nottinghamshire. They work with almost 250 people to enable each individual to lead a happier and healthier life in their own community.

<https://reachuk.org/>

The Challenge

Reach already had a carers manager who is employed to support unpaid family carers. They organise socials and peer support for carers as well as information sessions on important topics. They signpost carers to other networks services and support. They provide Reach Family carers with an informal network including access to a closed Facebook group.

However it was felt that they would benefit from a wider staff/volunteer awareness of carers and were keen to work with us to develop their support for carers further.

Work completed

Diane Naylor, NCA engagement worker contacted Reach in November 2024. Tracey Thurlow, who is the Projects and Participation Manager then attended the NCA Carer Awareness training Webinar in November 2024. She made initial contact with DN at NCA to progress training for remaining staff and possibly volunteers and to work towards gaining our Carer Friendly Quality Mark.

Sarah Wagstaff was then introduced as the Wellbeing Lead within Reach and was assigned as the Carers Champion for the organisation. Diane was invited to deliver Carer Awareness training at their Staff Inset Day on 1st May 2025, as part of the staff team Wellbeing afternoon. The NCA carer awareness training was delivered to over 30 staff members as part of the Reach Inset Day.

Reach developed a full and varied Programme of events during Carers Week, which encouraged a wide variety of Carers/families to join in and attend.

In July, 2 more Carer Champions were designated, to cover all 3 sites (Southwell, Mansfield and Newark). All carers champions had completed the training and were awarded with carer champions badges from NCA.

Carer Friendly Award

'Reach Learning Disability were awarded the Carer Friendly Organisation Quality Mark, in recognition of the current and continuing support given to Carers of those who access REACH services and activities and recognising their commitment to supporting unpaid carers.

<https://reachuk.org/>



Diane Naylor (NCA) with Steve Shatwell (CEO - REACH)



Left to Right - Fiona Fitsimmons & Sarah Wagstaff (REACH Carer Champions), Diane Naylor (NCA), Mark Bramble (Parent Trustee - REACH)

'I've had some initial conversations with our Learning and Development Manager and other colleagues, and everyone is positive about the Carers training and us working towards the quality mark'

Tracey Thurlow Projects and Participation Manager

'Over the past year, we've worked closely with Diane Naylor and the team at NCA to review and strengthen our support for family carers. Through this partnership, we've taken meaningful steps to ensure that carers feel seen, valued, and supported across all areas of our work. We're incredibly grateful to Nca for their guidance and support throughout this journey.'

Outcomes and Impact

- 43 staff members have completed Carer Awareness training, helping to embed a deeper understanding of carers' needs across the organisation.
- They hosted a dedicated Carers Event during Carers Week, providing a space for carers to connect, share experiences, and access information and support.
- 3 Carers Champions were appointed to cover all areas: Sarah Wagstaff, Tina Farrell and Fiona Fitzsimmons; who will continue to lead on carer engagement and advocacy within Reach.
- They have actively promoted carer awareness across all five of their Reach Centres.
- They continue to offer socials, workshops, resources and signposting for family carers.



Reach staff Carer Awareness training in May

'Can I start off by saying a huge thank you to both you personally and Nottinghamshire Carers Association as a whole for your ongoing support with helping us to evaluate and continue to grow our offering to family carers at Reach. Reach have always valued and understood the importance of supporting carers partly due to the lived experience that exists within our staff team and that is represented on our board of trustees. I however have only recently taken on the role of carers manager and have been very grateful for the formal training, regular email updates and information but also the opportunity to discuss what we are doing currently and our plans for the future. This has been beneficial and given an opportunity to reflect on how best to prioritise and ensure support is available to everyone when they most need it. It was also great to have you deliver training to our wider staff team at our inset day in May, this was so valuable in raising awareness and starting important conversations about the things we are already doing well but also the little changes that we can make to further support carers'

Sarah Wagstaff – Carers Manager & Champion (REACH)

Feedback from carers

'I have met some amazing people in my journey as a carer ; some have become very dear friends who understand the road we are travelling. Medical teams are often brilliant and staff at Reach are so warm, friendly and supportive. My life is much richer because I'm a carer.'

'I'm very aware that caring has brought compromise and loss . My career, ambitions and aspirations have changed out of all recognition. I don't regret being a carer for one moment as it has been a wonderful journey , but I sometimes mourn for the version of myself that is gone for ever.'

