

16 June 2010

Mutual Caring:

To coincide with Carers Week the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities reiterates the need to develop better support for people with learning disabilities and their older family carers when they are caring for each other



As more people are living longer, there is a growing number of people with learning disabilities who are providing ongoing care to older family relatives (usually a parent), sometimes in their eighties or nineties. This can involve doing the cooking, cleaning, shopping, providing company and keeping them safe in their home. Many people get a lot of satisfaction from the responsibility of providing care for their older relative but also feel the strain of providing care, which can become too much. There is little awareness that people with learning disabilities need recognition and support as family carers.

‘Mutual Caring’ project

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities has carried out development work over the last three years to learn about what helps families where there is mutual caring. The key messages from this work are:

- there is a lack of awareness about mutual caring: work needs to be done nationally and locally to identify families and understand the scale of the issue
- older people’s services, learning disability services and carers’ services often do not work together to support families where there is mutual caring: the result is that these families often fall between the gaps and receive little or no support
- the above services need to set out clear lines of responsibility to meet the interdependent support needs of the older carer and the person with a learning disability

- because of the time they spend caring and their worries about leaving an elderly relative, people with learning disabilities in mutual caring roles often find themselves even more isolated than others, with less time to make friends and engage in social activities. This in turn, reduces their support network
- person centred planning, circles of support, offering personalised budgets and providing peer support groups are all effective ways of providing support that is built around families' needs
- help is also needed with practical tasks such as jobs around the home or claiming essential benefits.

Resources for families and professionals

A range of helpful materials for families and professionals has been produced by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities:

- Two guides for frontline staff and services. **Supporting Mutual Caring** explains how best to support and respond to the needs of older families. **Circles of Support and Mutual Caring** advises on how to develop circles of support so that people with learning disabilities can get the help they need from a wider group of people in the local community.
- A pack of three **Growing Older Together** booklets for families. **Supporting You as an Older Family Carer** gives advice about accessing support and planning for the future. **Supporting You and Your Family as You Grow Older Together** is for people with learning disabilities. **Supporting You to Support Your Family** is for relatives and close friends of older families that include a person with a learning disability.
- A policy note, **Need 2 Know: Mutual Caring**, has been written for policy makers, commissioners and staff working in services supporting older families that include people with learning disabilities.

These resources are available as part of **Mutual Caring: Multimedia Resources**. This double disc pack includes both a **DVD** showing four films ([Being a Carer](#), [Carer's Assessment](#), [Person Centred Planning](#), and [Peer and Group Support](#)) and a **CD ROM** with digital copies of all the Mutual Caring resources for families and staff (not the Need 2 Know). This excellent resource for staff and anyone interested in mutual caring is available for *just* £5.

Full-colour printed copies of **Supporting You as an Older Family Carer** and **Supporting You and Your Family as You Grow Older Together** are also available. These innovative booklets give advice and can provide the necessary structure for assisting families in planning for the future. They can be ordered in bulk and are available for *only* £5.

To order, please contact our publications team at 020 7803 1101 or fpld@fpld.org.uk

These resources are also available to download from www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/mutual-caring

How can we help?

If you would like to find out about the training and support that the Foundation can offer on mutual caring, please contact 0207 803 1144 or email mmattingly@fpld.org.uk