



## **Carers small grants for support groups Evaluation of pilot scheme 2013**

### **Aim of the pilot**

To fund a small grants scheme enabling groups for carers to be run in York. The scheme will include some outcome based evaluation to find out how effective groups are in supporting local carers.

*“Both York Carers Forum and York Carers Centre are of the view that providing group based support and activities is a valuable and cost effective way of carers accessing support e.g. through massage treatments at York Carers Forum meetings, or craft and art classes. Often the FCS grant provides a one off break only and does not specifically promote peer support and contact.”* (Minutes of Carers Strategy Group meeting, July 4<sup>th</sup> 2012)

The proposal was to fund carer support sessions for adults, which will aim to meet a one of more of the following outcomes from the York Carers Strategy Action Plan bearing in mind the perceived benefit of peer support:

- Ensure carers have access to a range of flexible breaks.
- Carers will have wider access to accurate information and advice through a range of communication methods.
- Support to maintain mental and physical well-being.

## Overview of groups receiving funding

Five local voluntary organisations or carer led groups applied successfully for funding and thirteen grants were approved in spring 2013 offering a diversity of opportunities including:

- A series of sessions teaching yoga and meditation skills.
- One off sessions requested particularly by young adults carers to have a break and develop new skills eg chocolate making and flower arranging.
- Support groups for specific carers eg a social event for carers of people with mental health problems and groups sessions for carers of people with dementia.
- Support for a carer led group to provide mini-massage sessions at regular meetings as well as mini-workshops at a event during Carers Week.

## Numbers of carers

191<sup>1</sup> carers in total were in attendance at the 13 groups that were funded by the grant. There were 274 attendances recorded at all the sessions funded by the grants and 160 completed evaluation forms returned and collated. Not all carers returned an evaluation form and of those who did, some did not answer all the questions.

## Profile of carers

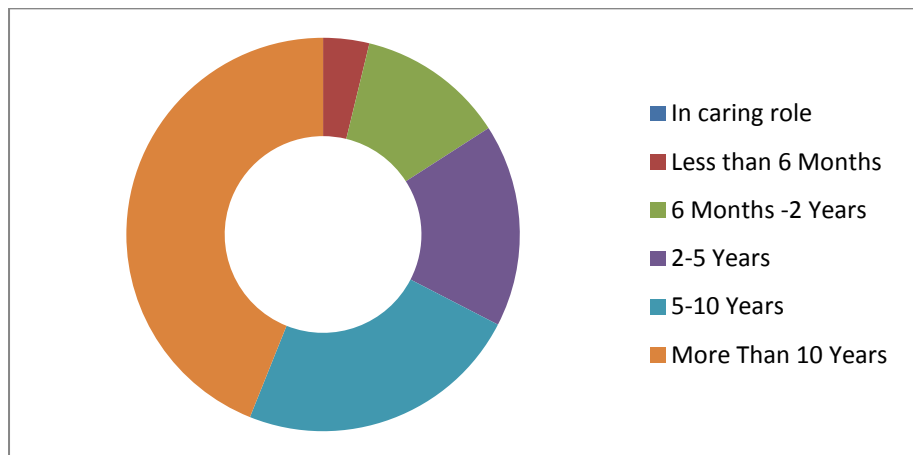
This is a summary of information from the evaluation forms completed by carers who attended the events/groups funded by the grants.

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<sup>1</sup> Some carers attended more than one of the 13 events organised through the small grant support so will be counted more than once.

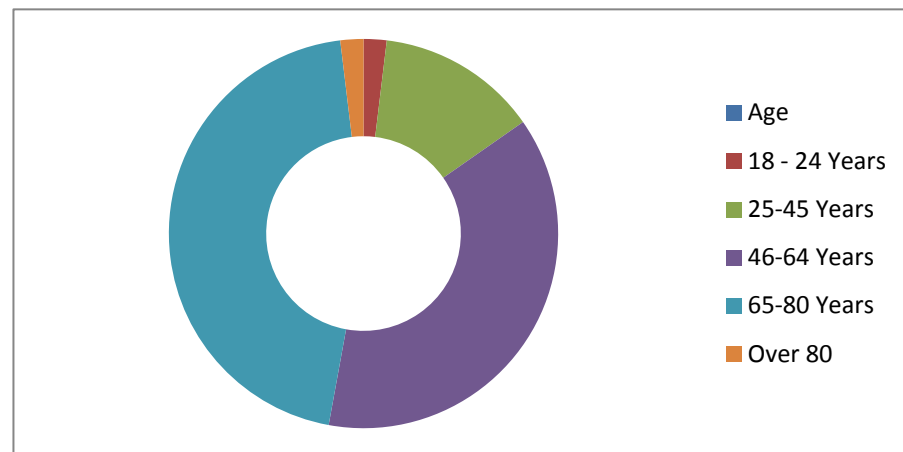
**‘How long have you been in the caring role?’**

132 carers provided information.



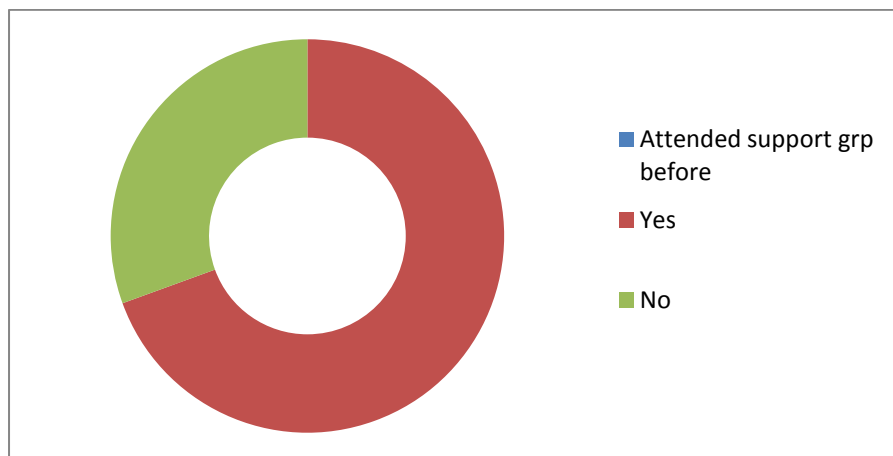
**‘What is your age?’**

157 carers provided information.



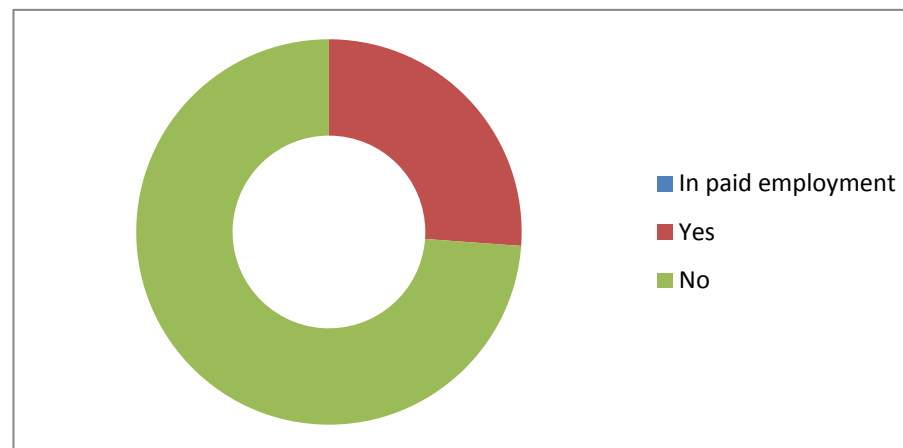
**‘I have attended support groups for carers before’**

180 carers provided an answer.



**‘I am in paid employment’**

130 carers provided an answer.

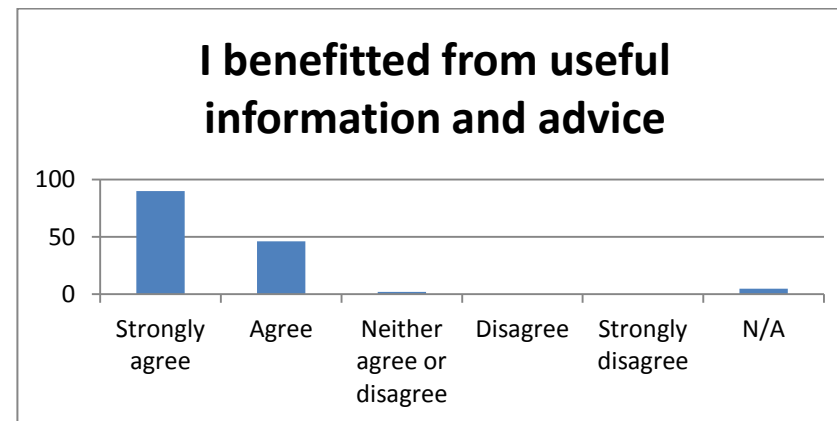
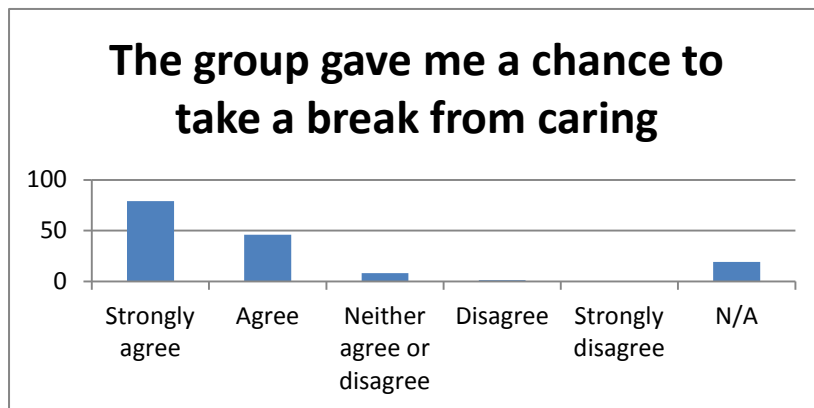


### Key points:

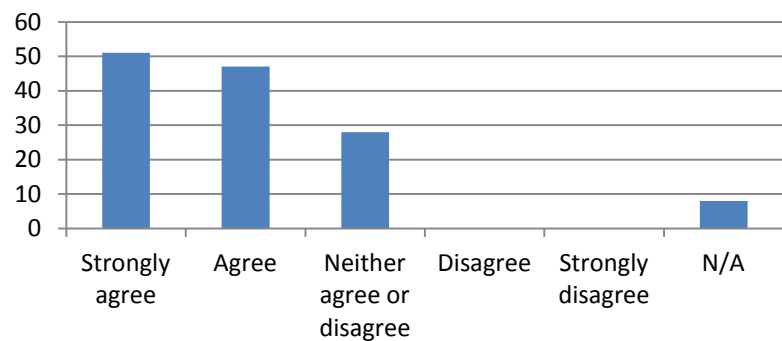
- Carers from across the age range attended sessions, though few were under 25 or over 80.
- A significant proportion of carers, 30% of the total, had never before attended a support group before.
- Over a quarter of carers who attended are in paid employment.
- 16% of carers who attended had been caring for 2 years or less and 44% for over 10 years.

### Outcomes for carers

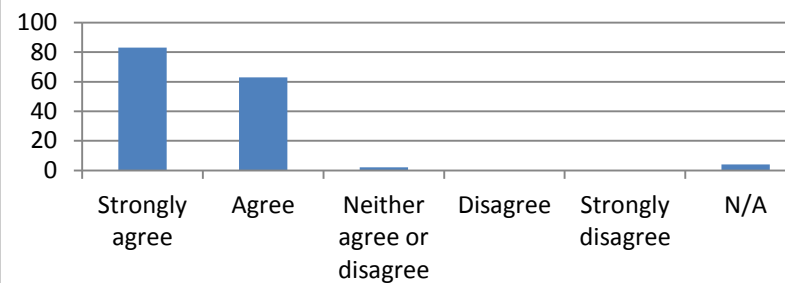
Carers were asked to give individual feedback about the impact of their attendance at a group. This has been collated across all the groups:



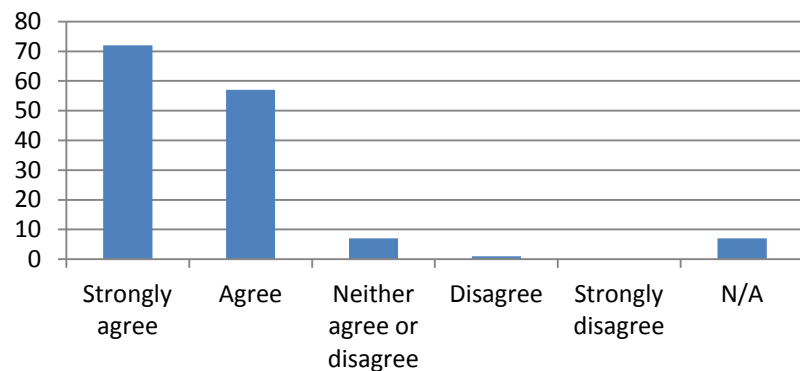
### Attending the group has helped me maintain my physical health



### My emotional wellbeing has benefitted from attending the group



### I feel supported in my caring role



The feedback is overwhelming in demonstrating how a range of outcomes for carers were met across all the groups that were funded.

### Benefits for carers identified by the organisations who received grants

- Helped to lower carer stress levels.
- Carers set up their own peer support group after the sessions.

I watched one carer change from saying she had no choice but to cope....to actually recognising her own strengths and ability to cope.

More detailed evaluation ...revealed significant improvements in wellbeing and social relationships for this group.

Carers talked really openly about their home situations and supported each other despite having only just met.

### What carers said

- “Having some quiet me time”
- “I’d recommend this as a great way of de-stressing from the daily routines. Feel emotionally and physically refreshed”
- “I felt very supported by other people”
- “The pamper evening was a really good idea, just what we needed as carers of relatives with dementia as we didn’t have to think and could just enjoy ourselves”
- “Talking to other people in the same position, I don’t feel so isolated”
- “Learning new stress relief and pain relief skills”
- “Learnt a lot of information that I wasn’t aware of”
- “Getting to know more about the stages of dementia”
- “Making a start meeting people in my same situation”
- “There are always speakers on subjects which are needed by carers and good advice can be had”

- “Meeting people like myself and having massages”
- “Friendships made, information shared, distractions from the tiring and relentless daily struggle”
- “A lovely treat”
- “Fantastic, learned new skills, lovely to create something and have a sense of pride in what you have made. Relaxing, calming and enjoyable”
- “Meeting other people and exchanging thoughts on similar problems”
- “Receiving information – we are at the very start...and are looking for as much information as possible to help us as carers”

### **Learning for the future from organisations**

- The grant did not cover the full costs of running a number of the groups and some organisations underestimated the costs of running the groups they organised.
- More time to use the funding.
- Carers do not always find it easy to attend events due to working full-time and caring commitments.
- Thinking differently to meet the needs of male carers in the future.
- Need to take into account cost of printing the evaluation forms.
- Costs of completing applications and cost of promotion of events.
- Being able to offer events that reach young adult carers.
- Would like to offer events again and build up a core of carers who spread the word to help welcome new carers.

### **Outcomes for carers**

The evaluation gives evidence of positive outcomes for carers:

(Percentages are based on the total number of carers who responded to the question)

**Breaks**

- 82% of carers said that the group gave them a chance to take a break from caring.

**Information and advice**

- 95% of carers said they benefitted from useful information and advice.

**Physical health**

- 73% of carers said attending the group helped maintain physical health.

**Emotional wellbeing**

- 96% of carers said their emotional wellbeing benefitted from attending the group.

**Supported in my caring role**

- 90% of carers said they felt supported in their caring role.

Carers who attended the groups and gave feedback report high levels of benefit from the group they attended.

The evidence suggests that peer support is extremely helpful to many carers alongside being a cost effective way of offering support and access to information.

There have been concerns expressed in York about the limited availability of breaks for carers and the lack of opportunities for emotional support. This pilot scheme demonstrates that funding a range of groups for carers successfully contributed to carers being enabled to take a break and a very high proportion of carers reported benefits to their emotional wellbeing.