

## Case study: identifying transferable skills

### Age UK Milton Keynes Employment Services

We support quite a few mature carers looking for work. One of the things they often share is a sense of isolation and as a result a lack of confidence, particularly in being able to find work. This is especially the case when they have been carers for much of their lives. We get a lot of “How can I write a CV when all I’ve ever done all my life is care?” Of course it’s not easy, but we start talking about them as a person with a unique set of skills and knowledge and it comes as a real surprise that they do indeed have many skills that would be real use to employers. So what transferable skills do carers have? Well, we’ve found that most have strong evidence of:

- patience
- communication skills
- great dedication and loyalty
- nursing skills
- sense of humour
- organisational skills (consider having to administer complex drug regimes and dealing with NHS and social services staff, for example).

We also have to work on job search, interviewing and IT skills. Because of many carers’ lack of exposure to interviews, we find role play a good way of practising the different types of interviews they may experience. As well as asking them to play the role of the interviewee, we also ask them to play the role of the interviewer, working out what questions to ask and developing an awareness of the kind of answers employers like to hear.

It’s not unusual to see a great transformation in some carers. One of our customers who had cared for her severely autistic son for many years was in a position where she was able and wanted to work. But she had very little work experience of any kind, although she had spent some time doing voluntary work at a hospital. When she started with us she lacked confidence and had no idea of what she could do. Over a period of time we helped her to identify her transferable skills and to understand her strengths. At the same time, we coached her on job search skills, interview skills and helped her to write an interesting CV which brought out her gentle, patient nature, her sense of humour and her affinity with children. It was amazing to watch her grow in confidence as the weeks went by, and her improvement in interview skills brought her a spontaneous round of applause at the job club.

One day we were looking together at a job site and spotted a job in a nursery. With a little encouragement, she was persuaded to have a go at the application. She rang a few days later to say she had got an interview, and then came in, wreathed in smiles, to tell us that she had been successful.