



Families are key to making independent living a reality

Think back to when you first moved out of home. Did your family help you decide where to move to and help you to set up your first utility bills? Did you call them the first time there was a power cut, or at times when you missed seeing them daily? Now you live independently (and probably have done for some time!), do you still have contact with your family?

Like anybody else, many people with learning disabilities want to stay in touch and be supported by their families when they move out of home. Support staff come and go; families are always there. Family carers hold a wealth of knowledge and history about their relative and usually know best how to communicate with them. Family carers know the difference between “yeah” and “yesss”, and the meaning of certain body movements.

The Care Act gives family carers stronger legal rights to involvement in their relative’s care and support, even if their relative no longer lives with them. This new law also strengthens the right to support for family

carers themselves. Family carers are seen as equal partners in care and support for the first time in law.

Since the implementation of the Care Act in April this year, our one-to-one support has highlighted a lack of Care Act training for frontline professionals, especially in the area of the rights of family carers. In many parts of England the law is not being followed correctly, resulting in devastating effects on the lives of people with learning disabilities and their family carers. Needs are not properly recognised, resulting in reductions of the support that enables people to live their lives. Family carers will stand in for the loss of support at a

moment’s notice, often ignoring their own needs. They help their relative understand the changes imposed on them, whilst trying everything they can to get the right support reinstated.

Through our support, workshops and information services, Hft’s Family Carer Support Service has empowered families to challenge poor practice and get the right support for their relatives to live independently. By supporting them to speak up and voice their legal rights, family carers are included and listened to. We welcome stronger rights for people and their family carers in law, but feel strongly that better training is needed for frontline professionals, particularly local authority assessors.

The Family Carer Support Service is running workshops across England for family carers. The workshops give families the information and confidence they need to get the right support for themselves and their relative with learning disabilities. We support family carers and develop resources on a wide range of issues; for information or support, please call us on 0808 801 0448 (free, even from mobiles!) and visit www.hft.org.uk/familycarersupport

Rhianon Gale, HFT Family Carer Support Manager



Hft is a national charity supporting people with learning disabilities.

We constantly look for innovative and creative ways to support people with complex needs or challenging behaviours. We use specialist skilled staff and the latest developments in personalised technology to transform care, achieving the best possible outcomes for the people we support.

During the conference, Rhianon Gale from our Family Carer Support Service (a free, national service for carers who have a relative with a learning disability) will be delivering a workshop on using the Care Act to make independent living a reality, alongside Barrister Steve Broach.

For more information on Hft and the services we provide, visit www.hft.org.uk

Transforming outcomes for people with complex needs and challenging behaviour



BIG THANKS to the sponsors of our 2015 Annual Conference, **AJGallagher**, **Certitude** and **HFT**. Their sponsorship enables us to give out free places to people with learning disabilities and families.