

## **Transcript of video about the unpaid carers' platform Mobilise based on a presentation at the Adass East Carers' event**

Dom Taylor, Director of Partnerships, Mobilise: Mobilise and Central Bedfordshire have worked in a new way to reach out carers and harness online connections.

People sometimes see digital and online as not connecting in the same way (as) the real world works but this (*refers to post shown on screen*) is someone who posted on the on the Mobilise community chat group earlier in the year we were running this project with Bedfordshire.

Just that opening line: 'Good evening, lovely people in my phone,,,,' It sort of makes you feel that she's really feeling connected to people out there who she's never even met before in real life, but she feels like she can ask questions, go into quite a bit of detail about particular caring issues that she's going through.

95 other people posted back with suggestions, information, advice, some emotional support. People sort of giving their little thumbs up emoji, someone was giving them hugs.

So there's a lot of people who involved in this conversation and you can see that the actual post actually reached another 832 carers as well. So a lot of people are watching and taking in information all time so it's really important to see this as a as a community that's out there.

We also work with 25 other local authorities up and down the country. In the East of England we've worked with Cambridgeshire, we work with Luton, and we're just starting to work with Essex.

We have online communities and we have information, we have guides to caring, and we hope that we present this in an easy accessible format.

I think the most important thing is that we are by carers, for carers, so people who are part of the Mobilise team have caring experience. Sometimes they're parent carers for children with autism or downs, and sometimes their partner or spouse has a particular condition, or they're caring sometimes for a parent.

What we're trying to do is build carers' capacity and getting the community to really help each other. In that way I feel that we can build resilience amongst ourselves to sort of cope with some of the difficult situations in caring.

And for the councils and local authorities and the NHS that helps, because it really reduces that demand when things reach crisis. One thing that I think is quite different about the service that Mobilise provides to the local authorities is that we're actually reaching out to carers in different ways: Facebook, on Google, you might see an advert for a YouTube video pop up when you're browsing something else, so we're looking at what carers are looking

for and then trying to give sort of little nudges to get them to click through to find information, even if they haven't called themselves a carer before.

We discovered Terry putting an advert out on Facebook. He then signed up to our personalised guide to caring and he joined what we called a 'Cuppa' which is a Zoom session with lots of carers joining in. He then got further support through our coaching programmes.

He was feeling guilty about wanting a sort of an independent life as well as well as being a carer, and we found out of that, that he's actually then sort of felt less guilty for looking after himself but he's also managed to carry on working as well.

Carla, she was new to caring, her mother had a stroke. So she discovered our services by searching through Google and she was actually looking for Carers' Allowance - so some type of benefits information. But then she also dug in little bit deeper and really worried about what the impact of that caring would be on her, and how she could prevent such stressful situations.

So she started one-to-one calls with us, and she said right at the start of that conversation that she was filled with a bit of dread. But she's ended a little bit hopeful.

We think it's probably one in five of the adult population have some kind of caring responsibility. For a loved one, for a friend, even for a neighbour, and it may not be full time but a lot of these people are working as well.

The local authorities and care support groups, a lot of men who care, don't actually come along to the face-to-face sessions, so maybe online digital is a way that they can actually reach out and find information.

Just during this very small time frame we actually reached 9000 different carers by putting out these these adverts, this marketing online. A lot of people were accessing outside of the working hours.

A lot of people who are below retirement age were using these services, we think that 45,000 individuals in Central Bedfordshire have some kind of caring role and a lot of them are not engaging at the moment. Just from their postcodes we could see that there's a real mix of where people were located the across the whole county.

These are some of the sort of reports that we go back to Central B eds with every single week. There were hundreds of carers coming through the system. There's a huge proportion to who are new to caring all the time, so we think up to a third.

But the biggest thing we found was that 3/4 of them actually haven't had any support, that's either through a local authority or a care centre or any other service.

We ask who people are providing care for, and parents and partners were a big portion of the people. There are a lot of people who are very much in need financially. One of the

most worrying aspects, though, is that people were spending a huge amount of time caring for their loved ones. A big proportion caring 24/7 or over 35 hours a week.

How you talk about the caring role is really important. One of the things we were trying to do is actually make this less like a formal carers assessment, making it a fun thing to sort of get what the carer needs but also getting information back to the local authority.

We've got a lot of information on the Mobilise website. The type of content people were looking for very much around Carers Allowance, but also emergency planning help, those types of things.

And you can see the mobile has been the primary way that people are getting access to this - this has just become part of modern life, that people are accessing information on their phone: that's what they do.

Nearly 42% of interactions came from male carers, so higher than traditional support and 2/3 were happening outside of working hours. We saw that a lot of people were applying for Carers' Allowance so we made that much easier filling in the application rather than having to just go through the government websites.

We also have an online learning course as well, people saw that there was an improvement in their knowledge of how to look after themselves, making support and information available, and talking about emergency plans. Most importantly we felt was getting people more socially connected with people who understand what it's like to be a carer.

We take monthly snapshots, if we can just click on an e-mail and say what's important to right now. Taking a break was right up there, benefits information, getting paid support and balancing work and care.

People seem very happy with getting this information online so I think with Central Bedfordshire they saw this as a real advantage that they could offer this as a service.

Reviews have come back on the types of carers' benefits of this this gives to people. That last one from Kevin (*refers to post on screen*) that really, really resonated: 'Somewhere to go for people to understand. Not feeling so isolated and alone. Somewhere to let off steam. Great place for advice and suggestions. Other people's stories also make you appreciate what others are going through, so you feel connected.'

## **Questions & Answers**

1. We're the Essex Carers' Network. The priority we hear from our families, the top priority, is actually getting the right support for the person they care for and that wasn't on your list?

Dom Taylor: We're very much about supporting the carer themselves. We don't have all the answers about the support available for those they care for, and I think what we try and do is that every area we work in, we link through and signpost to that local support. So in Essex

it will be absolutely vital for us to link into your services and show people that there's places there for them to answer those questions and get that information.

Essex Carers: I do follow your community on Facebook which is really helpful, but you know one thing that I as a family carer find really irritating is when paid carers talk about how difficult their life is. Do you comment to those people and just tell them that this isn't your space?

Dom Taylor: Yes, so I mean we we're very strict that this is a safe space, just for family unpaid carers, it's not for professionals. So people can be open. Sometimes people feel judged if there is professional there, and we will moderate those comments if there's people who aren't carers there.

2. Unidentified speaker from NHS: You are working with Bedfordshire, so do you just have specific forums for people in Bedfordshire or is it countrywide?

Dom Taylor: We have both, so there is a national forum online. On the Facebook page we've got 5000 carers across the country who are part of that group, but we also have local information pages so that we signpost only information in Essex for people in Essex and when we run that service we also have the emails going out on a regular basis, and on our support newsletters which will target local information and spotlight local information as well to those individuals.

I think the main thing that we do when commissioned by local authority areas is being sort of an outreach digital service to reach many more people in the area. So we will go to reach many thousands.

3. Unidentified speaker: My question really revolves around accessing ethnic groups. It's a diversity question really. I mean my own experience is it's quite hard and quite challenging.

Dom Taylor: We've worked across different local authorities which have a huge diversity. We've worked in Newham and Tower Hamlets. I think there is less engagement because of traditional factors, as you say. Sometimes it's family stigma or people feeling that they may have failed if they come forward for help and we need to understand that better. Sometimes people can put a screen up in front of them and can get access to information so online is sometimes better for certain groups.

But we don't collect ethnicity when people come to the site. We see that as a barrier, sometimes that puts people off if they have to click loads of forms and define themselves.

4. Unidentified speaker: I've been on one of the Mobilise chats, there was less than 10 people on the chat - not enough people seem to know about it.

Dom Taylor: Our Cuppas, so it's like this session with a small group and we limit that because it's interactive so the Zoom sessions that we have, we have them every day so people can come in anytime, we have him in the evenings as well.

But that's just one aspect, most people who come through go onto the online forum and we are getting hundreds and thousands through that.

5. Unidentified speaker: I'm being asked to set up a parents of autistic adults group, but I can't do it on my own, the technical side of it would probably defeat me.

Dom Taylor: we can connect people from up and down the country it doesn't have to be local if it's that.