

Amit's story



“My experience of being a young LGBT+ Carer”

Amit is a 32-year-old gay man. He has been caring for his mum since childhood supporting her with her health and wellbeing. Here is his story

- **What was your relationship like with your mum through your childhood?**

My mum has always had mutable health conditions, diabetes, auto-immune issues, mobility issues and mental health conditions. At the time my childhood always felt quite emotionally charged, my mum needed a lot of support a lot of the time. I remember there was a lot of tears, and lots of emotions if mum was ill or something had gone wrong. It was a childhood where mum relied on me a lot, looking back on it was a very dependant relationship, with mum relying on me for emotional support as well as practical support such as cleaning the house, without which mum would have found it hard to cope, so I felt that I had to be resilient.

- **When did you start caring for mum?**

I was never conscious that I was caring for her, it was something that I had always done. Looking back on it was something that started quite organically, I guess around 5/6 years old I started supporting mum practically round the house, but before that I remember I always being concerned about her emotionally and being concerned about how she might act and behave at certain times. Looking back on it I was concerned about her mental health and didn't want to contribute towards making things harder for her. I used to support mum quite a lot if she was ill at night, and at about 7/8 years old I remember getting dedicated

choirs around the house which now I think were not age appropriate, I spent most of my weekends and after school, hovering, dusting cleaning the bathroom and kitchen. At the time I would've done anything to reduce the pressure on mum, but now I really do question if it was right for a child that age to be using bleach to clean for example, but that was my norm.

- **Were there any barriers to you accessing support as a LGBT Carer?**

I never thought to get professional support as a Carer, in fact I did not even realise I was a Carer at the time and I certainly wasn't aware of any support out there for Carers. Because the support I was giving mum was around her emotional and physical wellbeing I didn't feel comfortable or that it was appropriate to talk to the wider family about mums needs as I didn't want to cause her shame or embarrassment. Looking back, I wish I had spoken to a teacher at school or a family member who could have given me the emotional support when I needed it or helped me access Carer support services. I remember it being hard balancing schoolwork, Gujarati Saturday school, then housework and the caring tasks I was having to do for mum – I didn't really relax as a kid, I didn't have much of a childhood, I think if I had got support for my caring role I would have realised what a 'normal' childhood was.

Growing up part of my reluctance to come out, aside from the cultural sensitivity issues around coming out in a South Asian family, I properly came out later to my family as I was worried about the impact on my mum's wellbeing and the pressure she would face in regards to how her friends, family and the wider community would react to her son being gay.

- **Has there been any barriers to you being out to other people such as other carers or professionals?**

I guess there was not any barriers to how I was treated by other carers or professionals because I didn't see myself as a carer growing up, by now I do see that I am a carer and know where I need to go to get help, I guess at the time the biggest barrier was a lack of knowledge about being a carer to begin with.

- **Have you got a message you would like to pass on to any LGBT+ people out there that are caring and not getting support?**

Do it, access the support that is out there. It is so important that Carers look after their own emotional, mental and physical resilience, and make sure that their needs are met too. Don't be embarrassed to ask for what you need from these services, there is more help than you know out there. As a carer you are always worried about someone else's needs, don't be afraid to get that help for yourself. As LGBT people we are often used to apologising for ourselves, editing ourselves around people and in wider society – when it comes to support you may need as a carer its important that you are upfront about the support you need, and what you need from the services that are there to help you.