



PRESS RELEASE

DATE DATE, 2019

Birmingham Labour Councillor named as carer awards judge

A Birmingham councillor who was also a full-time carer for her husband said the burden “nearly broke her”.

Mary Locke, who was elected to serve as a Labour councillor for Stirchley Ward, scaled back her working hours when her husband of 40 years was diagnosed with Vascular Dementia and Alzheimer’s.

She said: “It made total sense to look after David when he was diagnosed. He is my husband and I vowed to look after him in sickness and in health. That doesn’t mean being his full-time carer was easy though. On the contrary, much of the time I felt undervalued, exhausted, isolated and very, very sad. The burden of caring for him nearly broke me.”

It is because of her personal experience as a carer that Mary was asked to join a panel of judges for the first Carer Friendly Business Awards Birmingham.

The awards are for businesses across Birmingham which have contributed to supporting carers in their community and/or workplace. Organisations and individuals who are carer friendly and regularly go above and beyond in their support for carers are being encouraged to enter.

Mary said: “As a fulltime carer I’ve experienced the loneliness and challenging moments that all carers get. That’s why I’ve fought hard within my role as a Councillor to improve conditions for carers across the city.

“I’ve got to know a lot of carers within the local area and I know first-hand the struggles they can have, which is why I was honoured to be asked to participate in this wonderful awards programme.”

Mary joins Saqib Bhatti, currently the youngest ever President of the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Philip Done, who is Relationship Manager for Ageing Better in Birmingham, a programme that aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation among people over 50 across the city as part of the judging line-up.

The judging panel would not be complete without someone who is still in a caring role and can judge from personal experience.

Sylvia Johnson-Davis has been caring for her mother who has Alzheimer's disease since 2014. She also has two children and has openly discussed how hard she finds her role as a carer, while also bringing up her own family.

She said: "Unless you are, or have been a carer, no one understands just how stressful it is. I am balancing trying to help my mum, while also being a good mum, wife and friend. I am committed to helping as many carers across the city as I can and I think recognising the businesses that are supportive of people in these roles is a great start."

Forward Carers was launched to make a real difference to the lives of people caring for older frail people, sick or disabled friends and family members. The organisation also launched the Working for Carers programme, which encourages companies to support staff who may also be in a caring role.

Simon Fenton, the CEO of the organisation said: "We're confident we have found the right balance of personal carer experience and business knowledge among our judging panel. It was crucial we found people who will be sympathetic to carers and can also recognise the importance of what these supportive companies are offering."

Nominations for the Awards will run until August 5, 2019, with the winners announced in September.

To submit a nomination, [click here](#).

Notes to editors

- For further details, to arrange an interview or more photographs, email fiona.bailey@ojpr.co.uk or call 0781 3988247 or 01604 882342.