"Mental health carers deserve support, both in relation to the people they care for and for themselves as carers. Indeed carers often work long hours in unpredictable circumstances and with little or no aid to care for those closest to them. But in this way, carers are often an invaluable aid to health professionals’ work, giving an experienced insight into the care and needs of the service user." - Carers Trust, 2014.

The overall aims of the Support Group are:

- Provide detailed information on support services and create valuable links for carers to meet with staff from local services.
- Gain support from peers and discuss specific concerns.
- Promote care choice for specific needs - personalised approach.
- Educate carers on the CST process to enable continuity at home.

"I thought a lot of good advice was given and shared" - Carer

Following the introduction of Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) Groups within the Mental Health Occupational Therapy Department in NHS Fife, the Occupational Therapy Team recognised that a carer’s role in supporting a family member with dementia can be stressful.

It was identified that there was a need for a Carers Support Group to establish whether the provision of resourceful information and education on dementia, as well as a supportive environment, would result in a reduction of carers' stress.

"Being able to discuss various aspects with others who are in the same situation" - Carer

"Carers Centre visit very good. Dementia Research Nurse talk very encouraging. Alzheimer's Scotland Adviser very helpful" - Carer

To date, four Carers Groups have been running in conjunction with the CST Groups.

Positive feedback provided by the carers on conclusion of the groups highlighted the effectiveness of the group aims. Carers have described the group as a "lifeline" and a "lifesaver."

Carer Groups can be run by a number of organisations; however, it has been recognised that the personalised approach used within these specific groups was its biggest strength.

References
Carers Trust (2014) - Carers Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (1145181) and in Scotland (SCO43870)