

## Help available for carers

The Department of Health recognises the vital role played by carers. This recognition has increased in recent years through -

**Caring for Carers:** a national strategy for carers, which announced proposals to give support to carers. The Prime Minister said that caring for carers is a vital element in caring for those who need care.

**The National Service Framework for Mental Health**, which was published in 1999, sets out seven standards, one of which, Standard 6: Caring about carers, says "All individuals who provide regular and substantial care for a person on the Care Programme Approach should have:

- an assessment of their caring, physical and mental health needs, repeated at least on an annual basis
- their own written care plan which is given to them and implemented in discussion with them"

The Framework also enables people to become involved in planning care locally through the Local Implementation Team: each team should have a carer representative.

**The Care Programme Approach.** Everyone in touch with mental health services should have a thorough assessment of their needs and there should be a clear plan for their care and treatment. People with a severe illness and/or multiple needs may be cared for under "enhanced CPA" and they and their carers should be given a written copy of their care plan.

**The Carers and Disabled Children Act, 2000**, which enables carers who provide, or intend to provide, a substantial amount of care on a regular basis to someone aged 18 or over to apply for a carer's assessment. This applies whether or not the person they care for has had an assessment under the Care Programme Approach (CPA) or is in receipt of services from a local authority.

Whether you are a carer providing a substantial amount of care on a regular basis depends upon the impact of caring upon the carer. It does not depend on whether the carer lives with the person or is providing a set number of hours of care per week.

**The 1983 Mental Health Act.** The "nearest relative" has a number of rights under the Act which enables him/her to:

- require an approved social worker to assess someone who might need to be admitted to hospital
- apply to the hospital managers for a compulsory admission
- prevent a compulsory admission from taking place
- express his/her point of view when the patient's detention is reviewed by tribunal or hospital managers

## Requesting a carer's assessment

You may request a carer's assessment at any time. Contact your local social services office, whose address can be found in the telephone directory, or mental health services.

Before your needs are assessed, it is important to think through issues in advance. These may include:

- How willing and how able are you to provide care now and in the future?
- How caring affects your social life or your job?
- Will you need breaks from caring?
- How good is your health?
- Are there any relationship or financial problems?
- What practical or emotional support do you need?
- What other responsibilities do you have, eg bringing up children, caring for elderly parents?
- What would happen if you became ill?
- Are you able to provide care effectively?
- Do you need someone to help you get your views across?
- What do you want from the assessment?

As a result of the assessment, services may be provided for you and/or the person you care for. In some areas local authorities will charge for them and should inform you about this. Also, money may be provided to enable you to buy the services you need.



## How to obtain information and advice

You can obtain information about mental illness and about caring for someone with a mental illness from the following organisations:

**Alzheimer's Society** helpline on 0845 300 0336 (local rates) from 8.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday

**Carers UK** helpline on 0808 808 7777 from 10am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm, Monday to Friday

**Depression Alliance** for information and support on 020 7633 0557 from 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday; textphone 020 7928 9992

**Manic Depression Fellowship** for information and advice on 020 7793 2600 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

**MIND** information service on 020 8522 1728 (London) or 08457 660163 (outside London) from 9.15am to 5.15pm, Monday to Friday

**NHS Direct**, a 24 hour helpline staffed by expert nurses on 0845 4647

**Rethink** 0845 456 0455 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

**SANE** helpline on 08457 678000, which is open every day of the year from 12pm to 2am

**Young Carers Initiative** contact details for over 300 young carers projects 01962 711 511

The Department of Health has produced guidance with Making Space "Developing services for carers and families of people with mental illness". It is available free from NHS Responseline on 08701 555 455, quoting publication number 29778.

### Websites:

www.rethink.org/carers  
www.carers.gov.uk  
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

## Notes

You may find it helpful to write down the following names, addresses and telephone numbers in respect of the person you care for.

the GP of the person you care for

their local psychiatric hospital/unit (look in the telephone directory for the NHS Trust responsible for psychiatric care)

their local community health centre (look in the telephone directory for the NHS Trust responsible for psychiatric care)

the names of the following care staff and their base, eg hospital or community mental health centre -

a	consultant psychiatrist
b	social worker
c	community psychiatric nurse (CPN)
d	support worker

the names and telephone numbers of any local groups which may help you, which you may find out from your local psychiatric hospital or community health centre or from the organisations that are listed above

a
b
c
d

# A commitment to Carers



Help for relatives, partners and friends of people with a mental health problem

For further copies of this leaflet please phone Rethink on 0845 456 0455

Rethink is a registered charity no 271028  
This leaflet was produced by Rethink for the Department of Health

# About this booklet

It can be a devastating experience to discover that someone you love and care about has a mental health problem. You need both information and support to be able to help that person effectively.

This booklet explains -

- what relatives, partners and friends should expect from mental health services
- how to get help in your caring role
- how to get the information you need to help the person you care for



## Are you a carer of a person with a mental health problem?

The term *carer* is used here to describe someone who provides or intends to provide practical and emotional support to someone with a mental health problem. You may or may not live with the person you care for. You may be a relative, partner, friend or neighbour. You may be a young person but you now find yourself in the position of needing to support an unwell person.

The term *mental health problem* is used to describe a common mental illness such as depression or a severe and enduring mental illness such as schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder (manic depression).

# What carers should expect from mental health services

## Recognition & Understanding

- You should be recognised and listened to as a partner in providing care
- You should be valued as someone dedicated to helping the person you care for and who knows them well
- You should be treated with courtesy and respected for your skills e.g. overseeing their medication
- You should be able to work with staff who understand the effects of mental illness on yourself and your family
- You should be able to request an appointment with the consultant psychiatrist or another mental health professional

## Support

- You should receive help and information when it first becomes evident that you are providing care for someone with a mental health problem
- You should have the chance to discuss your concerns about the person's illness and how it is affecting you
- You should receive prompt and positive responses to your requests for help
- You should be able to get immediate help in a crisis
- You should have your needs assessed as well as those of the person you care for and have them reviewed periodically
- You should be able to have breaks from caring
- You should be given access to help in communicating with staff e.g. interpreter, signer

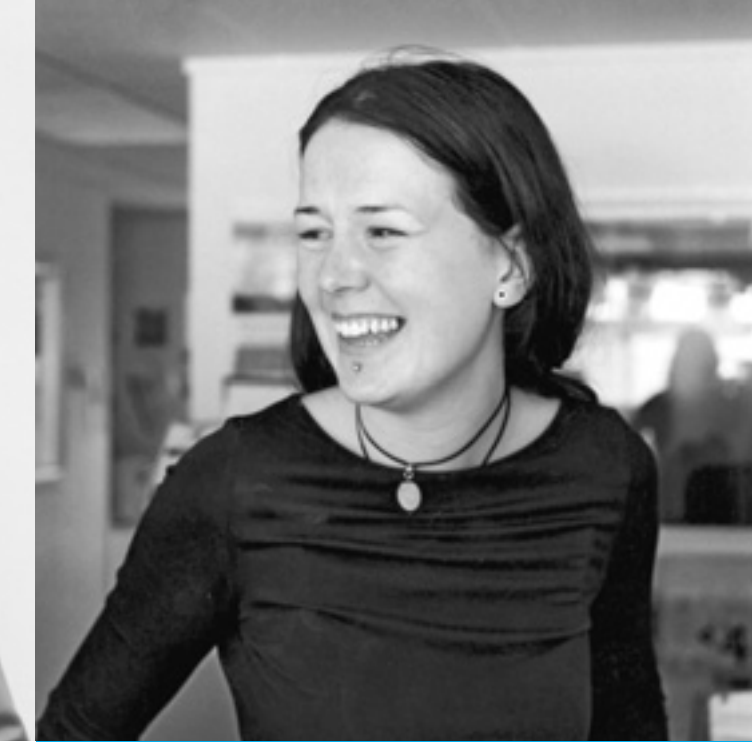
## Information

- You should be given an explanation of the mental health problem affecting the person you care for and be told where you can go to get more information
- You should be told what treatments the person is receiving, what other treatments are available, how they work and what the potential side-effects are
- You should be told what services are available for the person you care for such as day care and employment services
- You should be told how to recognise signs of a relapse
- You should be told who to contact in an emergency and be given a 24 hour phone number
- You should be given advice on how you can best cope with the effects of the mental health problems at critical times such as home leave and the period following discharge
- You should be given information about what support will be provided when you are no longer able to provide care yourself  
*The following should be made available at your request. You should be informed about:*
- How to obtain a second opinion
- Mutual support carers groups
- How to get help with any financial problems
- How to claim benefits that you and the person you care for are entitled to such as Disability Living Allowance and Invalid Care Allowance
- Your right to make a complaint and the procedure for doing so



## Involvement

- You should expect that mental health staff will encourage the person to allow their carer to be involved unless that person has clearly expressed the wish to exclude you
- You should be able to give your views and have your questions answered about the care plan
- You should be able to have someone with you at meetings to help you put your views across
- You should have the opportunity to be involved in the planning and development of services in your area
- You should be able to choose whether you are prepared to accept the role of carer



## Confidentiality & information sharing

You and the person you care for have the right to expect that information either of you provide for mental health services will not be shared with other people without your consent. This includes information provided by you as a carer not being shared with the person you care for and vice versa. This can only be over-riden if justified through risk or if this is required by law.

Confidentiality should not be accepted as an excuse for not listening to you. You should be given sufficient information by mental health services, in a way that you can readily understand, to help you provide care effectively.

