

Caring for adults with mental health

What is a carer?

The Care Act 2014 defines a carer as someone who provides practical unpaid help or emotional support to family members, neighbours or friends. Carers usually support someone who is a relative or friend. A carer may offer advocacy, regular help or supervision with everyday activities such as domestic support eg shopping, cooking, personal support eg washing, bathing and dressing; physical or emotional support.

Carers are not paid workers or people who volunteer on behalf of an organisation or company. Some people who provide this valuable care and support do not recognise themselves as 'carers' while others recognise but shun the title.

Unpaid carers make an enormous contribution to ensuring the people they care for are able to live as full a life as possible. The carer's role can be time consuming as well as emotionally and physically demanding.

How many people are carers?

The 2011 Census identified 5.8 million carers in England and Wales. Over a third of carers were providing 20 or more hours of care each week. Since 2001, the number of people caring for 50 hours or more a week has increased by 270,000, or 25%. The Department of Health suggest that the

health of carers deteriorates incrementally as the number of hours of care increases.

Looking after our carers

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CFT) has made a commitment to support the carers of patients who have a mental health problem. The Trust values the contribution of carers and is committed to working in partnership with them, recognising that they need support and assistance in order to fulfil this role. The Trust's Carer's Policy sets out how the Trust does this.

CFT is a formal member and currently holds the gold star recognition of the Triangle of Care (Carers' Trust) national initiative. The Triangle of Care guide was launched in 2010 to build on existing developments and good practice to include and recognise carers as partners in care. It offers key standards and resources to support mental health services ensure carers are included and supported when the person they care for has an acute mental health episode; the inclusion of carers benefits staff, carers and patients alike. Carers are key 'partners' in providing care especially for relatives and friends who may have mental disorders.

Carers are recognised in law. The Care Act provides formal a responsibility for

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organisations to assess a carer's need for support, where the carer appears to have such needs. The Care Act relates mostly to adult carers (people over 18 looking after another adult). All patients treated by CFT should be asked if they have a carer. As soon as a carer is identified then an assessment of their needs will be offered.

The carer's assessment must consider whether the carer works, undertakes any form of education, training, leisure activity or their wish to do any of these activities.

The assessment may find ways to help the person in their caring role. These will usually be set out in a care plan. Carers may be entitled to a personal budget – this is assessed on an individual basis and isn't means tested. Carers may also be eligible for other benefits in addition to the personal budget.

CFT has a range of support services we can offer. Carers and their assessors will have been trained in the resources that may be available eg. carers workshops at Resource Centres across the county where carers have the opportunity to work on their own Well-Being Plan.

Any information gathered about the carer is kept confidential and isn't shared without the carer's consent.

Carers and next of kin

Adult carers, may also be the nearest relative. This is important if the person needs to be detained or sectioned under the Mental Health Act. The nearest relative is not the same as the next of kin.

Part of the role of the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) is to coordinate Mental Health Act assessments, that may result in a person being detained, is to formally identify the nearest relative

and ensure they are made aware of certain rights.

The nearest relatives has some rights when a person is, or may be detained under the Mental Health Act. Nearest relatives can ask for an assessment to decide if their relative should be detained or discharged from hospital under the Act.

Support and further information

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

The Trust's website – www.cornwallft.nhs.uk has information for carers including how to be assessed for a Carer's Personal Budget. Search 'Carers Corner'.

There is also a Carers Policy, a leaflet called "A commitment to Mental Health Carers in Cornwall" and a comprehensive information pack is available on request.

The Trust also hosts a monthly Carer's Committee for carers of people with mental disorders. New members are always welcome. This links into the County's Carer's Partnership Board for all carers. The county Carer's Partnership Board meets quarterly.

Cornwall Carers Service and Kernow Young Carers

These have formed a new service for carers in Cornwall. The service offers access to local support groups. It is dedicated to the wellbeing of young and adult carers, offering impartial information, advice and support.

The service can be contacted on T- 0800 5878191 www.supportincornwall.org.uk/carers or fis@cornwall.gov.uk.

Carers UK Advice line:

Available five days a week, if you live anywhere in the UK. They will undertake benefit checks and advise on financial and practical matters related to caring.

Open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm call on 0808 808 7777

BeMe

A mental well-being service provided by Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The BeMe team offer a range of free services, to people experiencing common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. BeMe's services can be accessed by self-referral on 01579 373700 or by referral from a GP, other health or social care professional.

Rethink Mental Illness

A national voluntary sector provider of mental health services that was set up by carers. They understand that caring for someone with mental illness is challenging, that mental illness is a fluctuating condition, often misunderstood and stigmatised, causing considerable emotional distress to carers.

For further information nationally about their groups and services, please contact Rethink on: 0121 522 7007 or email info@rethink.org

The Mental Health Act Code of Practice

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Code of Practice to the Mental Health Act 1983 (Department of Health) provides useful information for carers.

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