

Extract NICE GUIDANCE ON INVOLVING FAMILIES AND CARERS OF PATIENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Discuss with the person using mental health services if and how they want their family or carers to be involved in their care. Such discussions should take place at intervals to take account of any changes in circumstances, and should not happen only once. As the involvement of families and carers can be quite complex, staff should receive training in the skills needed to negotiate and work with families and carers, and also in managing issues relating to information sharing and confidentiality.

A. If the person using mental health services wants their family or carers to be involved, encourage this involvement and:

- 1. Negotiate between the service user and their family or carers about confidentiality and sharing of information on an on-going basis*
- 2. Explain how families or carers can help support the service user and help with treatment plans*
- 3. Ensure that no services are withdrawn because of the family's or carers' involvement, unless this has been clearly agreed with the service user and their family or carers.*
- 4. Give the family or carers verbal and written information about:*
 - the mental health problem(s) experienced by the service user and its treatment, including relevant 'Understanding NICE guidance' booklets*
 - statutory and third sector, including voluntary, local support groups and services specifically for families and carers, and how to access these*
 - their right to a formal carer's assessment of their own physical and mental health needs, and how to access this.*

B. If the service user does not want their family or carers to be involved in their care:

- 1. Seek consent from the service user, and if they agree give the family or carers verbal and written information on the mental health problem(s) experienced by the service user and its treatments, including relevant 'Understanding NICE guidance'*
- 2. Give the family or carers information about statutory and third sector, including voluntary, local support groups and services specifically for families or carers, and how to access these*
- 3. Tell the family or carers about their right to a formal carer's assessment of their own physical and mental health needs, and how to access this*
- 4. Bear in mind that service users may be ambivalent or negative towards their family for many different reasons, including as a result of the mental health problem or as a result of prior experience of violence or abuse.*

C. Ensure that service users who are parents with caring responsibilities receive support to access the full range of mental health and social care services, including Information about childcare to enable them to attend appointments, groups and therapy sessions.

NB. Resources about mental health conditions and local statutory and voluntary resources are in the training packs and available on the Trust's online GP resource, www.beh-mht.nhs.uk/4GPs (Username: gpuser. Password: behmht4gps).

We can also supply hard copy Patient Guides on mental health topics, which can be download from that site. Please email communications@beh-mht.nhs.uk for details.