

**Further Information:**

If you feel that you need help or advice in your caring role please contact:

**Carers Services Development Co-ordinator  
01749 836606**

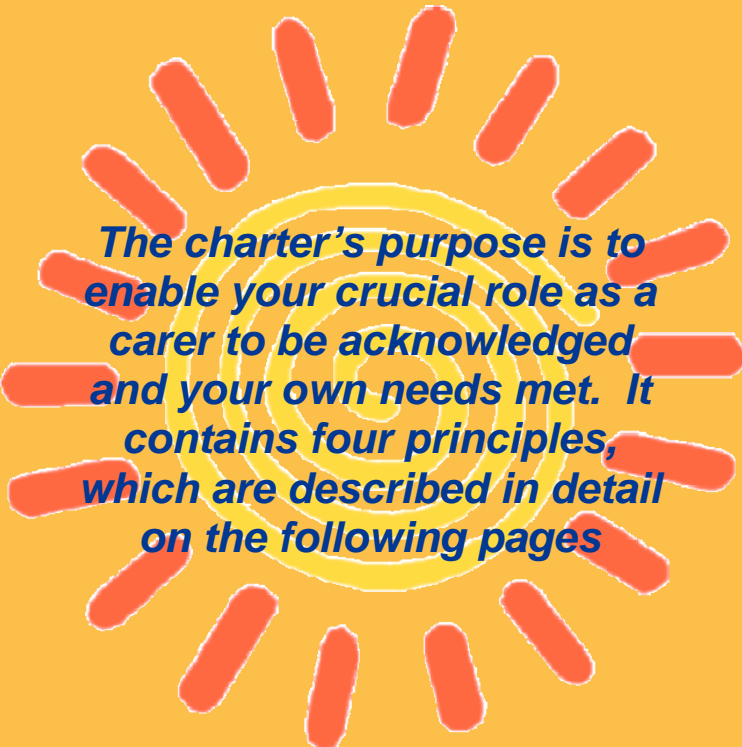
**The Patient Advice and Liaison Officer**

is available to help to sort out problems, responds to concerns, suggestions or queries from patients and carers **01278 432022**

Should you wish to make a formal complaint about the way the Somerset Partnership NHS and Social Care Trust has treated you as a carer, you can contact the **Complaints Manager 01278 432007**



**VALUING CARERS  
A CARERS' CHARTER**



*The charter's purpose is to enable your crucial role as a carer to be acknowledged and your own needs met. It contains four principles, which are described in detail on the following pages*

## INTRODUCTION

This Carers' Charter is the result of the commitment and hard work of many people.

Carers' provide invaluable support to some very vulnerable people and this contribution needs to be valued, acknowledged and respected. I like to think that we, at the Trust, behave in a way that reflects the sentiments of this document and I know that we have been working in partnership for some time with carers to meet the needs of the people they care for. However, carers have needs too if they are to be most effective in the care that they give, we have acknowledged this but have not given it the high profile it deserves. This document along with the activities in carers week, the information "zap pack" the newly set up carers web site, the carers conference and other support networks will go a long way to formalise the relationship we have with carers and give clarity to their expectations of our service.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved with taking this charter forward with drive and enthusiasm and, most importantly, the many carers that work tirelessly to support those they care for. There is no way to quantify the help you give-just to say thank you.

Linda Nash

Chair of Somerset Partnership

employment issues, financial matters, including entitlement to benefits, and training for carers.

- You should be given a copy of your own care plan in a form you find useful.
- The services that you receive should be of good quality, appropriate to your needs and provided within an agreed time.

### Principle 4:

#### Valuing your involvement in service development

You should be given the opportunity to be actively involved in the planning, development and evaluation of services

- You should be given the opportunity to state your views on the quality of the services provided and on the range of services, which need to be developed.
- You should be told how your views will be taken into account as part of an on-going evaluation process.
- Where you are invited to meetings where you can contribute to the planning, development and evaluation of services, you should be offered help in arranging alternative care for the person you care for and receive payment for these alternative care costs and travel expenses.
- You should be given adequate notice of meetings, consultation periods and other relevant events.
- You should be told how the particular consultation process will work.
- You should be told how the information you provide will be used.
- You should receive feedback on the outcome of the consultation within six months of completing the consultation.

- consider how your caring role affects your relationship with other family members and friends and your ability to hold down a job.
  - address your own health and well-being, your need for emotional and other support and how you would like to be helped in providing care
  - consider whether you would like to take a break from caring and if so, look at what type of support you think would enable you to do this.
- You should be advised on what action to take if you are not happy with the assessment or the decisions made as a result of the assessment or if you think that the care plan is not being implemented properly.
  - All staff should recognise that you may have additional commitments to that of your caring role, such as looking after your children or going to work.
  - Your personal characteristics should be respected and taken into account and you have the right to be treated without prejudice.
  - The information that you are given should be clear and accurate.
  - The information should be provided in a way which is helpful to you – for example orally, in writing or on tape, in your own language, through an interpreting service or in discussion with a qualified professional.
  - You should be told who to contact if you need help and to know that your request will be responded to within a reasonable time.
  - You should be told about opportunities to take a break from caring.
  - You should be given details of local support groups and advocacy services.
  - You should be helped to get advice about housing and

## Purpose of the charter

The Charter's purpose is to enable your crucial role as a carer to be acknowledged and your own needs met. It contains four principles, which are described in detail on the following pages. By following these key principles health and social care professionals will be supporting you – which in turn should improve the care of your partner, relative or friend.

## Definition of carer

The term carer is used here to describe someone who provides or intends to provide practical and emotional support to someone with a health problem or disability. You may or may not live with the person you care for. You may be a parent, relative, partner, friend or neighbour. You may be a young person who has to support an unwell or disabled parent or other relative.

## Principle 1: Recognising your expertise and knowledge

Your essential role and expertise should be recognised and respected.

- You should be listened to without bias or prejudice and be taken seriously.
- You should be recognised as someone who is providing support to the person for whom you care.
- You should be treated as someone who has relevant and important knowledge about the person for whom you care.
- All staff should be aware of the distress and anxieties that caring can cause, and offer you help to cope with this.
- You should be asked to give your opinion – this should be respected and valued and, where necessary, kept

confidential.

- Where plans such as hospital admission are being considered, you and the person you care for should be given the opportunity to consider alternative care.
- Your views should be taken into account in the decisions about the person for whom you care. If you need help in communicating your views, this should be provided. You should be told how the information you provide will be used.

## **Principle 2:** **Welcoming your involvement in care planning**

You should be involved in planning and agreeing the care plan for the person for whom you care.

- You should be given a copy of the care plan of the person for whom you care (with his or her consent). This should state the responsibilities of all the people who are involved in providing care.
- You should be able to choose whether you wish to take on, or continue with, the role of a carer. Care plans should not involve you in any actions that you have not agreed to.
- Even if the person you care for is unwilling for you to be involved in planning and agreeing his or her care, you are entitled to information on the way the service works and relevant mental health issues. ( Please ask a member of staff for a copy of the Somerset Partnership's Best Practice Guidelines: Confidentiality and Information sharing with Families and Carers).
- You should be given information about what to do and whom to contact in times of crisis.
- If you feel that the care plan is not working or is not being properly implemented, you should be given the opportunity to

state your views and to be listened to and be involved in the discussions on the action to be taken to address the problems you have identified.

- Care plans should also include how to recognise and respond to signs of relapse. Whenever possible you should be told what to look out for and what you should do.
- When the person you care for is receiving care and treatment in hospital, you should be involved in planning and agreeing the discharge plan, including the date of discharge.
- So far as possible, meetings should be held at a time that suits you and the person for whom you care.

## **Principle 3:** **Responding to your needs as a carer**

Your needs as a carer should be recognised, responded to and reflected in the care plan. You should be provided with appropriate help and support.

- You should be told of the right to a carer's assessment under the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000.
- If you have a carer's assessment, this should:
  - if you so wish, be carried out separately from the assessment of the needs of the person for whom you provide care.
  - allow you to have someone to support you while the assessment is taking place.
  - give you the opportunity to assess your own needs.
  - assess your needs without the assumption being made that you are willing or able to take on a caring role or to continue to provide the same level of care.