

CARERS' RIGHTS

As a carer I have only two statutory rights:

- [1] I am entitled to a Carers' Assessment, even if the person I care for does not wish to engage with services.
- [2] I am entitled to my own care plan.

As a carer I can expect to:

- Be taken seriously when expressing concerns.
- Be treated with understanding and respect.
- Be informed of the range of relevant services and support available.
- Be afforded a rapid response in an emergency situation.
- Be provided with information if this is in the best interest of the patient and other members of the family.
- Be informed about a relative's illness, the diagnosis, treatment and possible side effects of the treatment.
- Be included in a family-centred approach to treatment and support.
- Be included in care planning, implementation and review.
- Be helped with problems created or exacerbated by caring for a relative with a mental illness.
- Know the names of other members of the care-giving team.
- Be offered culturally accepted treatment options that are inclusive of the family.
- Seek other opinions regarding the diagnosis and treatment of a relative.
- Be informed of the complaint procedure.
- Be consulted about a relative's discharge plan.
- Receive a mental health service that recognises the need for families to participate in shaping the service and invites families to take part in service planning, implementation and evaluation.

- Be encouraged to take time out when required, to prevent 'burnout' or to cope with stress.

Carers have a statutory right to their own assessment, even if the person they care for does not wish to engage with services. Carers often feel that if the person who is ill is receiving the right services then their needs are being met. It is important to realise that this is not an assessment of your ability to care or your financial status.

It can be a difficult process to go through, admitting being a carer, admitting how much it involves. However, if the assessment is offered at the appropriate time and by someone willing to spend time helping you through it should enable you to identify where you may need support and how to get it. This should improve your ability to cope with your role.

The Care Co-ordinator may offer the assessment during the Care Plan meeting. If not, then it is perfectly all right for you to request one when you feel comfortable about it. If it is offered in front of the person you care for you might feel uncomfortable accepting it. If you do turn it down this does not stop you approaching the Care Co-ordinator later to accept the Carers' Assessment. You may find that discussing different issues helps you to be clearer about your role, your needs and what if anything can be done to lighten the burden.

CARERS CHARTER

We have developed a Carers' Charter which outlines your rights as a Carer. This can be obtained from your Carers' Assessment Worker or Norma Walton at Somerset Partnership 01278 432000