



**CARERS  
TRUST**  
SCOTLAND

# a menu of questions for carers

Supporting people with mental health issues

# a menu of questions for carers

## questions to ask

This leaflet is designed to help you get all the information you need, as a carer, about the diagnosis and treatment of the person you care for.

A Menu of Questions for Carers was written and created in partnership in 2019 and reproduced in 2025 by mental health charity Change Mental Health and carers charity Carers Trust Scotland.

You can get some of this information from most members of the clinical team involved, not just the psychiatrist, or from written information that they can provide.

If the person gives permission, the psychiatrist, or members of the care team, will be able to give you information about their condition and care. Even where the person being cared for does not give permission for information to be shared with the carer, you can still have your views listened to and you can share information with the psychiatrist or clinical team.

Although you may not want to ask all the questions listed, you may find that they help you in preparing to meet the psychiatrist or members of the team. Not everyone will need all the answers to all these questions at the same time. You may have questions that are not covered in this leaflet. Even so, it should provide a helpful framework for deciding what you do need to know.

## About the illness

- ② What is the diagnosis or problem?
- ② If a diagnosis has not yet been made, what are the possibilities?
- ② Why has this happened to them?
- ② Will the person I care for recover?

## If diagnosis has been made

- ② What symptoms suggest this illness?
- ② What is known about the causes of this illness?
- ② What is likely to happen in the future? Will it get better or worse?
- ② Are there any changes in behaviour I should be alert to?
- ② Where can I get written information about this illness?

## About the assessment

- ② How will I be involved in the assessment process, sharing information, etc?
- ② What assessments have already been done?

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- ② Are there any other assessments that might be needed?
- ② Are there any physical problems that have been discovered? If so, what will need to be done?
- ② Have culture and background of person I care for been considered?

## Care Programme Approach (CPA)

- ② What is the CPA?
- ② What does the CPA mean?
- ② Is this person on the CPA? If not, why not?
- ② Will I be involved in the CPA?

## About care and treatment

- ② What are the aims of the care and treatment?
- ② What is your plan for treatment?
- ② How will outcomes be communicated with myself and my cared for person? Will the person being cared for have a say in their plan? If not, why? Will I be involved, if so how?
- ② Who else will be involved in the treatment?
- ② What is the role of the named nurse/Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN)?

- ② For how long will the person I care for need treatment?
- ② Would talking treatments (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), family therapy) be helpful? If so, are they available locally?
- ② How can I expect to be involved in the ongoing treatment and monitoring process?
- ② Are there any alternative treatments to what has been decided upon in the plan?
- ② What happens if the person I care for refuse treatment?
- ② What might they need at home to help them recover? How do we access that help?

## **Sharing of information**

- ② Have you asked the person I care for about how much information they are happy for you to share with me?
- ② Will I be informed about important meetings concerning the person's care and treatment?
- ② Can I see you on my own?
- ② Would you like to ask me for any other information about the person I care for or the family?
- ② Can I tell you things that will not be shared with the person or other members of staff?

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- ② Are the views on confidentiality of the person I care for clearly marked on their notes?
- ② How can I sharing information with you if my cared for person doesn't consent?

## Advance Statement

- ② Have you asked the person being cared for if they have an Advance Statement?
- ② If the person has an Advance Statement, are you abiding by it? If not, can you explain why? What can I do to help?
- ② What are you doing to ensure that their wishes and feelings are being upheld throughout treatment?

## Getting help

- ② How can I get in touch with you? Is there a centralised point of contact?
- ② Can I see you on my own?
- ② Who do I contact if I am worried about the behaviour of the person I care for?
- ② What do I do if I am worried that the person is becoming ill again?

- ② Who do I contact in an emergency?
- ② What help might be available?
- ② How can I get a second opinion?

## **Support for me**

- ② What is the difference between a carer and a Named Person?
- ② I understand that as a carer, I am entitled to an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carers Statement (as part of Carers (Scotland) Act). Who should I speak to about getting one?
- ② If I have specific needs of my own, who should I ask?
- ② If I need help, to whom should I turn?
- ② How might my own wellbeing be cared for throughout the treatment and recovery journey?
- ② Are you able to point me towards any contacts, help or resources to support my own mental health?
- ② Are there any local self-help or carers' groups that can help me understand the illness?
- ② How can I get advice and training on the day-to-day management of the illness?

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## Medication

- ② What medication is to be used and how?
- ② Is the lowest effective dose being prescribed? Can a low dose be prescribed at first and increased if necessary?
- ② What changes in behaviour should I be alert to which might suggest the drug is/is not working?
- ② How often will the medication be reviewed?
- ② Will I be involved in future discussions about the dose or type of medication?

## What should the benefits of the medication be?

- ② In the short term?
- ② In the long term?

## What are the possible side-effects of this medication?

- ② In the short term?
- ② In the long term?



## Managing the medication

- ② Why have you chosen this particular medication?
- ② How long will the medication have to be taken for?
- ② Are there any medications that could be used if this one does not work?
- ② What symptoms might mean that the dose should be changed?
- ② What should I do if the person I care for experiences unpleasant side-effects?
- ② What will happen if the person I care for stops taking the medication?

## Hospital treatment

- ② Does the person I care for need to be admitted to hospital? If so, how long for?
- ② If so, which one will it be?
- ② Will the ward be locked?

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- ② Will the person be detained in hospital? If so, what is the process for detention and can I be involved? Do I have to give consent for the person to be detained? How can I be of help in this process?
- ② If they get short-term leave from hospital, when and how will I be informed?

## Hospital treatment

- ② Will I be involved in discharge planning?
- ② What arrangements will be made for the person I care for regarding monitoring after discharge from hospital?
- ② If I am not able to look after the person when they are discharged, what will happen?
- ② Am I expected to help with anything, especially medication?
- ② Do you know of any self-help techniques that will help their recovery?
- ② How will I be supported to care for them after discharge? Who will be involved in that process?

## **If not admitted to hospital**

- ② Who will oversee the person's care and treatment in the community?
  - ② If placed on a community compulsory treatment order, what does that mean?
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support



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**e: advice@changemh.org**

Monday to Friday,  
10am to 4pm



**t: 116 123**

**e: jo@samaritans.org**

24/7  
365 days a year

**Scottish Independent  
Advocacy Alliance**

**t: 0131 510 9410**

**w: siaa.org.uk**

**Mental Welfare  
Commission for Scotland**

**t: 0800 389 6809**

**w: mwcscot.org.uk**

**CARERS  
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**t: 0300 772 7701**

**e: info@carers.org**

Monday to Friday,  
9am to 5pm



**t: 0800 83 85 87**

Monday to Thursday,  
6pm to 2am  
Friday 6pm to  
Monday 6am

**Mental Health Tribunal  
for Scotland (MHTS)**

**t: 0800 345 70 60**

**w: mhtscotland.gov.uk**

**Carers Scotland**

**t: 0141 378 1065**

**w: carersuk.org/scotland/**