



Family, friends and carers  
**Handbook for over-18  
mental health services**

*You and your journey: a carers' guide*

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# Introduction

## From one carer to another

“As family members, friends and carers of people accessing mental health services, we have worked with Oxford Health NHS professionals to design this handbook. It is something we wish we had received at the start of our journey.

We genuinely hope it will be of use and benefit to you. Please don't be put off by the size of this handbook. Look at it and take what you need when you feel able. It is not exhaustive.

It is intended to be more of an information tool that can be regularly updated. It can stay with you as you go through, what may be a very personal and sometimes difficult journey, with the person you care for.

It does not preach, it does not make promises, it does not have all the answers, but it does rely heavily on our own experiences of mental health services and our own personal journeys to hopefully support you and help you through yours.”



## Our commitment to you

Family members, friends and carers play an important role supporting someone with mental health illness.

We expect our staff to always treat you with courtesy and respect. It is our intention to listen to you and ensure you feel confident, well-informed, and valued when accessing our services with your relative or friend.

Oxford Health also recognises the impact caring responsibilities can have on people. We want to support you as much as we can. If we are unable to help, then we will endeavour to help you contact another appropriate organisation who can.

Our Family, Friends and Carers Strategy sets out our commitment to our family, friends and carers.

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/about/our-strategy](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/about/our-strategy)

## The Triangle of Care

As a Trust we have signed up to the Triangle of Care. The Triangle of Care is led nationally by the Carers Trust.

It brings together many years of research with carers looking at what is important to them when supporting their loved one within mental health services.

The initiative represents partnership working between the mental health professional, service user and carer.

When this partnership develops, it will work to promote safety and support ongoing recovery which improves the wellbeing of both carers and the person they care for.

**Website:** [www.carers.org/triangle-of-care/the-triangle-of-care](http://www.carers.org/triangle-of-care/the-triangle-of-care)



## Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for anyone who cares for or supports someone receiving care and treatment from our adult and older adult mental health services.

This may include our Adult Mental Health Teams (AMHTs), Inpatient Wards, Early Intervention Services, Complex Needs or Psychological Therapies Services.

It has been designed to give you an overview of what to expect from the Trust, and to provide you with the types of information and support that is available to you.



## Acknowledgements

With thanks to Mrs S. Brown, Mrs H. Peck and Mr A. Watson, mental health carers who have co-produced this handbook with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

## Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this leaflet is correct at time of print. Published by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, February 2024.

## Am I a carer?

A carer can be anyone of any age who provides unpaid support to someone who could not manage without their help, due to their illness, disability, frailty, mental ill-health, or substance misuse.

Anyone can become a carer. Carers come from all walks of life, all cultures and can be any age. You may be a wife, husband, parent, partner, son, friend or have any other relationship with someone who cannot manage without your support.



Mental health recovery can sometimes be complex and unpredictable there are times when being a family member, friend or carer can be challenging and stressful.

Family, friends, and carers play a critical role in supporting people with their recovery, but we recognise on occasions that you might sometimes need support too.

We therefore hope that this handbook provides you with an overview of how we as an organisation and other groups and forums can enable you to access help if you need it.

## Dedicated team contact details

Team name:

-----

Name of Keyworker or Named Nurse:

-----

Name of Consultant Psychiatrist:

-----

Contact number:

-----

# Understanding mental health services

Here we give you an overview of our mental health teams, inpatient units, and mental health processes. You can find out more about other mental health services we offer on the Oxford Health website.

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/services](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/services)

## Core Clinical Standards

The Trust provides a range of services to patients with varying levels of need. Care should be personalised and planned around the needs of the individual patient in accordance with the Core Clinical Standards.

The Core Clinical Standards policy outlines guidance on Core Clinical Standards which must be implemented by all secondary inpatient and community mental health and learning disability services.

It aims to establish a level of care for all patients accessing services across the Trust based on comprehensive assessment of need, good co-ordination of care, high-quality person-centred collaborative care planning and delivery, and effective crisis management. You can access the Core Clinical Standards here:

[www.england.nhs.uk/publication/mental-health-clinically-led-review-of-standards/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/mental-health-clinically-led-review-of-standards/)

All patients must have an assigned key worker as soon as possible when taken on for care and treatment, if there is a delay in assigning a keyworker the patient must be given a named person for contact until the keyworker has been identified.

The keyworker would normally be the person providing most direct care and development of the care plan with patient.

## What is a Care Plan?

Every patient who is under the care or treatment of one of our mental health services will have a comprehensive assessment of their mental health needs. From this a Care Plan will be developed that sets out how these needs will be met.

## How can I be involved in the Care Plan?

Care Plans are developed in partnership with patients. Carers can be invited to be involved with the consent of the patient and can request a copy of the plan. Care Plans are usually reviewed every six months (or more regularly if there is a significant change).

## What should be included in a Care Plan?

- ✔ The details of those involved in the patient's care.
- ✔ Contact details of the patient's Keyworker and who to contact outside of office hours.
- ✔ The arrangements for the patient's mental health care including any prescription medication or talking treatments.
- ✔ The arrangements for the patient's physical health care and who will provide it.
- ✔ The factors that might indicate the patient is becoming unwell and what to do if they do.
- ✔ An assessment of the patient's safety needs and the best way to manage them.

To find out more speak to a member of the care team.



## What is a Patient Safety Plan?

A Patient Safety Plan is a structured way to help patients plan a range of coping strategies, activities, and sources of support they can use at the right time to help them prevent or manage a developing crisis.

It should be completed collaboratively between the patient and the mental health worker. The patient should receive a copy of the safety plan and, wherever possible, you as their family member or carer should receive a copy too.

## How do we involve you in safety planning?

It is our intention to involve family members and carers in the safety planning exercise for our patients wherever possible. This is so the best response can be agreed if a developing crisis occurs. Additionally, it is important for family members or carers to receive a copy of the safety plan. However, both will rely on the patient giving consent to share information with you.

## Looking after someone in hospital

We know that when someone is admitted to hospital it can be a very distressing and difficult time for both the person you care for as well as yourself.

We aim to treat most patients in their own home wherever possible. Sometimes if someone is particularly unwell, they will be admitted to hospital so their needs can be fully assessed, and they can receive treatment. Our wards provide a safe place where trained staff can provide specialist care.



Sometimes if someone is very unwell, they may have to be admitted to hospital under a section of the Mental Health Act 1983. Read more on the Mental Health Act on page 59.

## Admission

When your family member or friend arrives on the ward, they will be welcomed by a member of the ward team. They will be shown around and to their bedroom. Valuables should not be left on the ward. You are welcome to bring in clothes, toiletries, and any other personal items to make their stay more comfortable.

Each person admitted to our ward is assigned a Named Nurse who will be your key contact for the duration of the admission.

Your family member or friend will have someone assigned to always look after them and they will be able to answer any questions you might have. If the Named Nurse is not available when you call or visit, then another member of the team will be able to assist you.

## Assessment

During the first few days following an admission several assessments will take place. This is for the clinical team to understand what support needs to be put in place to enable your family member or friend's mental health to improve and for them to return home.

This includes a mental state examination to assess their overall mental health wellbeing, a risk assessment to ensure that they are kept safe whilst on the ward, a physical health examination which might include taking blood and urine samples and a social care assessment which looks at areas such as housing, employment, benefits, and wellbeing issues.

## Visiting

Visiting hours may vary across the wards, additionally visiting guidance may change. In the first instance, please contact the ward and speak to a member of the team. You should receive information about the ward from a member of the team. A ward leaflet should be shared with you on the point of admission. If you do not receive this please ask a member of staff.

You can also find information about individual wards under Mental Health on the Oxford Health website.

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## Your involvement in care planning

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust wants to ensure you are still involved in the care of your family member or friend when they are in hospital. After an admission you should be given the opportunity to speak with a member of the ward team and discuss any concerns or issues that you have.

Each ward has regular ward rounds which give the clinical team the opportunity to discuss current treatment and progress with everyone involved. These discussions will also form the basis of the discharge plans, and if we have consent for you to be involved you are welcome to attend all these meetings.

Some of our wards offer dedicated time for families and carers, this may be called a family surgery or carers clinic. This dedicated time provides you with the opportunity to chat with the ward team in a safe environment and discuss your relative's care and recovery journey. Contact the ward to find out if it offers this and to get more information on how to book a slot.



### **Carers message**

Please do not miss these opportunities to be involved, they are a valuable insight into care and treatment and may allay fears.

## Planning for discharge

Leaving hospital can be an important life event so it is essential our patients receive good quality discharge care. Plans around discharge should commence soon after a person's admission and will be a part of all care planning processes.

Support available upon discharge will vary depending upon the needs and individual circumstances of each person. For some there may be no further need for support from mental health services but for others there may be a comprehensive support plan in place.

There will always be a discussion about how the patient and their family will access help if issues re-occur.

Prior to discharge a discharge planning meeting will be arranged, to include relatives and any team that will remain involved in post-discharge care. If we have consent for you to be involved, you are welcome to attend this meeting.

## Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions about an admission to our mental health wards:

### **Who can I talk to when my relative is on the ward?**

You can call through to the ward and speak to the named nurse who is assigned to look after your relative. If they are unavailable, then you can speak with a member of the team.

If the ward offers a family surgery, you can book a one-to-one slot to chat with members of the ward team about your relative's care and recovery journey. This will give you the opportunity to ask questions and share any concerns you may have.

### **What if I have information to share about my relative when they are on the ward?**

We encourage you to share any information that you feel may be relevant to your relatives' care. You can do this by contacting the ward or booking a slot at the ward family surgery (if they have one). There may be times when we want to ask you questions about your relative too and will contact you if this is necessary.

### **My relative has been admitted, so now what?**

Staff will complete a risk assessment and take appropriate steps to ensure your loved one feels safe on the ward. There will then be an assessment period. The length of time this takes will vary depending upon the patient's needs and risk.

Once the assessment is complete a treatment plan will then be agreed with the patient and a discharge date proposed - although this may change dependent upon the person's progress and response to treatment.

Treatment can include medication, meaningful activity, assessment and planning, and lower level talking therapies. If your relative agrees you may be invited to the ward review to give your own thoughts on progress, treatment and discharge planning. It may be that time away from hospital can be agreed at these meetings.

## The Mental Health Team

The Mental Health Team is responsible for providing your family member or friend's care and treatment for their mental health condition when being supported in the community.

The team is made up of qualified professionals from both health and social care backgrounds who work together to best meet the patient's individual needs.



Staff members may be psychiatrists, psychologists, community psychiatric nurses, social workers, and occupational therapists. The patient might receive support from one or more members of staff depending on their health needs.

The team also includes dedicated support workers to help people meet their recovery goals and manage their mental health living in the community.

Peer Support Workers (PSWs) are people who have experienced a mental health condition and are now using that lived experience to support people accessing mental health services and their families.

PSWs join other members of the care team to help support patients' wellbeing and provide inspiration for their recovery. You can find them across the Trust in various clinical teams, both inpatient and in the community.



The Mental Health Team is also supported by a friendly administrative team. It will most likely be an administrative team member who will answer the phone if you call.

You should receive information about the service from a member of the team. A service leaflet should be shared with you. If you do not receive this then please ask a member of staff.

Alternatively, you can find the Mental Health Team leaflets on the Oxford Health website.

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## The role of the Keyworker

Patients will be allocated a Keyworker, who will be responsible for working with them to agree what support they need in their recovery. The Keyworker is the main point of contact for the patient and their family.

The Keyworker can be of any profession: nurse, doctor, social worker, psychologist. For patients in community services only and where appropriate the keyworker could be a peer support worker or support worker if they are providing most care and support.



In cases where an unregistered worker is assigned as the key worker there must be a clear plan of how to escalate concerns, and their work with the patient must be overseen and regularly supervised by an allocated qualified member of staff.

The Keyworker takes overall responsibility for ensuring that the patient's needs are assessed, their care is planned, and those plans are carried out (in accordance with their care plan).

The Keyworker will be responsible for liaising with other professionals and services involved with the patient, both within their team and outside agencies (other NHS services, GPs and 3rd sector)

A patient's Keyworker may change over the duration of their care, and this can be for a few reasons. If this does happen, it is our intention to organise a handover period from one keyworker to another, to ensure that the patient has a seamless transition of their care. However, there will be occasions, which are out of our control, where this may not be possible.

It may also be necessary, on occasions, for us to use locum/agency keyworkers for a period too.

The Keyworker will arrange to see the patient at appropriate intervals and these meetings can take place somewhere that makes the person feel most comfortable, either at home, the team base or at a GP surgery.

If we have consent from the patient, you can be involved in these appointments and in development of the care plan.

## Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions about the mental health team:

### **How will my relative's GP be involved with the mental health team?**

The role of the GP varies depending upon the care needs of the patient. GPs may be involved in the assessment of someone who has been admitted under a section of the Mental Health Act.

They may also be involved in their ongoing care after they are discharged from hospital. The care team will explain the role of the GP to you.

### **Who is responsible for my relative?**

If your relative has been assigned a Keyworker, they will take overall responsibility (with the support of a Consultant Psychiatrist) for ensuring the patients' needs are assessed, their care is planned and those plans are carried out. During admission to hospital the Keyworker will remain involved, but decisions will be led by the Inpatient Consultant.

### **Who is my point of contact should I want/need to share anything with the mental health team?**

If you have been given the contact details of your relative's Keyworker then you can contact them however there will be times when they may not be available. It is advised that you call the mental health team on the number you or your relative have been given. Alternatively, you can call our coordination centre on 01865 901 000 where one

### **What if the relationship between my relative and their Keyworker does not work?**

Building a therapeutic relationship takes time and we would encourage you to allow a reasonable period for that rapport to develop between your relative and professionals caring for them.

However, if over time patients are not happy with the relationship they have with their Keyworker, they can speak to the team manager and ask to be assigned another Keyworker. It is likely the Keyworker will have also recognised this.

## Crisis Response and Home Treatment Team (Crisis Team) in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire

The Crisis Team is a 7 day a week specialist team of staff who support people who are in acute mental crisis to prevent admission to hospital where possible and facilitate early discharge from inpatient wards with intensive home treatment.

The team is run by staff from health and social care including psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, peer support workers and administrators.



In Buckinghamshire we have teams based in Aylesbury (North) and High Wycombe (Chiltern—South). In Oxfordshire we have a team based in the Oxford City. They are supported at night by the Night Response Teams in each locality.

For more information if an emergency occurs:

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/support-advice/what-to-do-in-an-emergency/](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/support-advice/what-to-do-in-an-emergency/)



## Mental Health Hubs

In line with mental health policy, aimed at increasing accessibility of mental health services, new teams have been established and will form what is being called 'The Hub'.

### Buckinghamshire

In Buckinghamshire we have the Bucks Primary Care Mental Health hub (PCMHH).

The PCMHH offers holistic, localised & faster access to mental health services to patients and carers. Services launched in the first stage of the hub implementation include:

- ✔ Service User Network (SUN)
- ✔ Individual Placement Scheme (IPS)
- ✔ Elmore Intensive 1:1 Community Support
- ✔ Psychological Therapies
- ✔ Advice & Guidance.

The second stage of the Hub implementation will focus on increasing support for eating disorder patients, provide physical health support for psychosis patients, provide targeted help for groups suffering inequality and self-help support for patients via the Buckinghamshire Recovery College.

Find out more about the Bucks PCMHH service:

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/service\\_description/bucks-pcmhh](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/service_description/bucks-pcmhh)

## Oxfordshire

In Oxfordshire we have the Keystone Mental Health and Wellbeing hubs in Abingdon, Banbury, and East Oxford. These have been developed to improve the health and wellbeing of people who experience serious and complex mental health difficulties in the community. Your GP or primary care mental health practitioner may suggest the Hub and with the person's agreement, they will make a referral.



Services include:

- psychological support
- relapse prevention
- medicine management
- peer support
- physical health
- employment support.

Find out more about the Keystone Mental Health and Wellbeing hubs:

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/keystone](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/keystone)

## Out of Hours support

Out of Hours support for someone in mental health crisis.

The person you care for may experience a deterioration in their mental health at any time and may require advice or support.

The Mental Health Team is open 7am-9pm every day, including weekends and bank holidays. If the person you care for becomes unwell outside of these hours and you need to speak to someone urgently, please call our co-ordination centre on 01865 901000 where one of our experienced call handlers will be able to assist you.

**Call NHS 111 and press option 2 for the Mental Health Helpline** if you need urgent mental health support but it's not an emergency. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for all ages.

### **Carers message**

If the person you care for is in crisis, you are likely to be in crisis too. Remember if you call in, it may be helpful to make notes as the emotional toll can make memories vague.



## Safe Havens

Our Safe Havens provide out of hours help and support to people and their carers who are experiencing a mental health crisis. Safe Havens are a non-clinical service located in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and are open evenings, weekends and bank holidays.

### **Buckinghamshire**

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/service\\_description/buckinghamshire-safe-haven](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/service_description/buckinghamshire-safe-haven)

### **Oxfordshire**

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/service\\_description/oxfordshire-safe-haven/](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/service_description/oxfordshire-safe-haven/)

## Emergency contact card

Complete this section with details you have been given by the Oxford Health service caring for your relative or friend. Then cut it out to keep in a prominent place.

### Daytime support

Name of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Out of Hours Support

Evenings and weekends

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Other helpful contacts

This could be the Crisis Team or your local Safe Haven

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Call NHS 111 and press option 2 for the Mental Health Helpline** if you need urgent mental health support but it's not an emergency. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for all ages.

**Call 999 for emergency services where you or someone else is at immediate risk.**

## Confidentiality and information sharing

We know that as a family member, friend, or carer you want as much information as possible about the person you are caring for to be able to provide them the best possible support.

Most of the time the person you care for is happy for us to share information with you, but sometimes when someone is unwell, they might change their minds about whether we can do this.

We understand how frustrating and worrying it can be if we don't have their consent for us to share information with you. However, if this is the case, we will always continue to listen to you, so please continue to share information with the clinical team.

We will also still help you to manage any symptoms that are of concern to you, as well as provide generic information on specific mental health conditions or medications that you believe your family member or friend is taking.

To help you understand the boundaries a little better, this list details what we can share with and without consent.

Consent not needed:

- Information on service and which health professionals are likely to be involved
- Diagnosis (only if already known by carer)
- An explanation of likely treatments, medications, and possible side effects
- The symptoms and behaviours witnessed by you and how best to support
- Contact details of the Keyworker or named worker
- Information on the Core Clinical Standards and what it involves
- How to support someone with a mental health need
- Information on discharge planning
- Advice on support available to you including a carer's assessment

Consent needed:

- Diagnosis (if carer is not aware of this)
- Personal circumstances
- Personal history

✔ Social circumstances

We will also continue to work with the person you care for to support them to see the importance of being able to share information with the people closest to them.

We will regularly re-visit consent to see if the person has changed their mind or may want to share some aspects of their care and treatment.

If you are worried about this then please do speak to a member of staff about whether you and the person, you care for should consider completing an Advance Statement.

### **What is an Advance Statement?**

Patients can make an advance statement which will tell us what they want to happen should they become unwell.

It means we can provide support in the way they wish when they are well, even though they may say something else when they are unwell.

For further information you can speak to a member of the care team.

## Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions about confidentiality and information sharing:

### **What if the mental health team won't talk to me?**

The rules of confidentiality should not be used by staff as a means of excluding family members and carers.

There is a lot of very important information which staff can provide to help you understand the needs of your relative and your own needs as a carer.

This type of information can be provided without releasing information about the patient and breaching confidence. Even if we cannot give you certain pieces of information it is very important to us that you keep in contact with us and continue to feedback to us any concerns you may have about the person you care for. We can continue to support you as the carer and signpost you to additional support.

If you do not feel you are being listened to or appropriately involved by staff, you should take this up with the team manager. If this does not resolve the issue you should contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) (more details on page 24).

### **What if my relative keeps changing their mind about sharing information with me?**

We will look to understand why a patient is refusing to share information with you. We will explain the benefits of having you involved in their care and will routinely re-visit consent to see if the patient has changed their mind. Sometimes patients are happy to share certain aspects of their care and we will discuss this with them. It is our intention to keep families and carers informed of the situation.

## Your feedback

Your feedback is incredibly valuable and enables us to continually develop and improve services. We want to hear about your experiences of accessing services with your relative or friend.

You can complete our online family and carer survey via the website link below and scrolling down the list to the carer, family, or friend survey. You can ask for a paper survey from the service.



You can also share your feedback, concerns, or issues directly to any member of staff.

**Website:** [www.iwantgreatcare.org/trusts/oxford-health-nhs-foundation-trust](http://www.iwantgreatcare.org/trusts/oxford-health-nhs-foundation-trust)

On entering the iWantGreatCare site above, select the Carer, Friend and Family survey from the drop-down list and then the service you wish to leave feedback for.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

We hope your contact with all our staff and services is positive.

However, we know that occasionally things might not be to the standard we expect. If that does happen, we are here to support you to make things right and resolve any issues as quickly as possible.

If you are unhappy about the care or service, you are receiving speak to a member of staff at the time or a member of the care team.

They may be able to resolve your concerns straight away. If your concerns remain unresolved contact the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS), which provides support and advice to patients and their families and friends.

We would like to reassure you that your relative or friend will not be treated any differently if you raise a concern through PALS.

**Phone:** 0800 328 7971

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/support-advice/pals](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/support-advice/pals)

**Email:** [PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)



# Getting the support you may need

As a carer it is important to look after yourself and keep healthy. It is not only important for you but helps the person you care for too.

Here are some tips for maintaining your own wellbeing.

- ✔ Talk to friends and family.
- ✔ Make time for yourself.
- ✔ Join a support group for family, friends and carers – talking to others experiencing similar situations can be helpful.
- ✔ Continue to do the things you enjoy, like hobbies or interests.
- ✔ Find out about getting a break, including respite care.
- ✔ Try learning relaxation techniques such as meditation.
- ✔ Learn to say 'no' – you are only human and cannot do everything.
- ✔ Ask for help if you need it, you have not failed as a carer if you ask for help.

Access Talking Therapies if you are experiencing low mood, stress, or anxiety – they may be able to help. You can find your local NHS Talking Therapy service on the NHS website.

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/nhs-talking-therapies](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/nhs-talking-therapies)



## Tell your GP that you are a carer

It is important you register as a carer with your GP surgery so they can include it on your medical record. If they are aware you have caring responsibilities, they may be able to offer more tailored advice and additional support.

## Carers Rights

The Care Act 2014 came into effect in April 2015. Amongst other changes it strengthened the rights and recognition of unpaid carers in the health and social care system.

As a carer, you have certain rights that can help your life become easier. You may have the right to receive financial support, help with your own health and wellbeing, and assistance from social services. You can find out more about your rights as a carer at Carers UK.

**Website:** [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

The best place to start is with a carer's assessment, this will help evaluate the support you might need as a carer.

## A Carer's Assessment

Firstly, let's address what it isn't. Be assured, a Carer's Assessment is not to assess you in your caring role, or to judge you on how well you are caring for someone. It's there to help you.

### What is it?

A Carer's Assessment is a discussion about you as an individual, your caring situation, and needs. It enables an individual to be formally recognised and supported in their role as a carer and is a time for them to express their needs and concerns arising out of their caring role.

If you are in an unpaid caring role, you can have an assessment no matter what your level of need, regardless of the amount of care you provide or your financial means. Young carers (under the age of 18) are entitled to a Carer's Assessment. A Carer's Assessment is free.

## Why have one?

An assessment can help you feel more supported, less isolated, and more aware of the help available to you. Your carer's assessment should cover:

- ✓ Your caring role and how it affects your life and wellbeing
- ✓ Your feelings and choices about caring
- ✓ Your health
- ✓ Work, study and training
- ✓ Relationships and social activities
- ✓ Housing, benefits and entitlements
- ✓ Planning for an emergency



## How will it help?

The assessment will provide you with information based on your needs, such as:

- ✓ Details on specialist carer' organisations which can help with your health and wellbeing, housing, benefits, employment, training and leisure opportunities.
- ✓ Carers' support groups
- ✓ Help to plan for an emergency

## **Where can I get a Carer's Assessment?**

Visit the NHS website to see how to apply for a Carer's Assessment in your area.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carer-assessments/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carer-assessments/)

## **Is a Carer's Assessment available for young carers?**

If you or your parents request it, your local council will carry out a Young Carer's Assessment. The assessment is different from the one adult carers have. It will decide what kind of help you and your family might need.

For any further information on a Carer's Assessment or a Young Carer's Assessment and where to get one visit the NHS website above or email [icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk).

# Emergency Plan

When you have a caring role, having a back-up plan in place can help ease your worries if you are unable to care at any point in the future.

Here are some of the things that you can include in your emergency plan:

- ✔ Who can be your emergency contact/s
- ✔ How you support your loved-one, their needs including details of any medications they need to take and where these are stored
- ✔ Details of the mental health team, keyworker and GP
- ✔ How long you can safely leave them unattended or alone

Having this type of information in one place can be extremely helpful at a critical time. It is helpful to share your plan with the emergency contact/s you have identified in your plan so they know what to do or who to contact.

- Tip: keep your back up plan in a safe place

Carers UK offers an interactive online tool to help you create an emergency plan.

**Website:** [www.carersuk.org/search/planning-for-emergencies](http://www.carersuk.org/search/planning-for-emergencies)



## Finding the support that's right for you

You may find it helpful to get emotional help and support from outside your circle of family and friends.

Information, advice, and support is available to carers in a variety of different ways, through Oxford Health, local carers organisations and other charities.

It is about finding the right support for you, at the right time. Now may not be the right time but you may want to try some of the resources below in the future.

**Carers message**  
Be kind and  
compassionate to you.

## Support available to you through Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

### **Buckinghamshire Family and Carer Support Group**

This is a safe space for family members or carers to meet with others in similar situations, enjoy friendly conversation, listen, ask and share.

The group is held on the last Wednesday of every month between 11am and 12.30pm.

For more information visit the carers' support page of the Oxford Health website.

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support)

**Carers message**  
You are not alone.

### **Oxfordshire/Swindon, Wiltshire and North East Somerset Carers' Open Space**

This is a safe space for family members or carers to meet with others in similar situations, enjoy a friendly conversation, listen, ask and share.

The group is held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month between 11am and 12.30pm

For more information visit the carers' support page of the Oxford Health website.

**Phone:** 07775 816 646

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support)

**Email:** [icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Family and Carer Support Group

This group is specifically for people looking after someone affected by self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Come along to connect with other carers who are experiencing similar situations. The group offers a safe and supportive environment to share your experiences and talk through any difficulties you may be facing.

**Carers message**  
Give yourself permission  
to take time out for you.

The group is held on the 3rd Thursday of every month between 6pm and 7pm.

For more information visit the carers' support page of the Oxford Health website,

**Phone:** 07775 816 646

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support)

**Email:** [icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## Carers' workshops

Free online workshops on a range of mental health topics. These workshops aim to help you get a better understanding of the mental health condition your loved one has and to help support you in your caring role. Our workshop programme includes personality disorder, bipolar, anxiety, depression, OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and more.

The workshops give you the opportunity to direct questions to our health professionals and to be part of a group where people are experiencing similar situations.

Carers' workshop programmes for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon, Bath and NE Somerset programme can be found on the Carers support page of the Oxford Health website.

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support/inhouse](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support/inhouse)

## Service specific groups, workshops or forums

The service providing care to your relative may offer groups, forums or workshops. Contact a member of the care team or use the email address below to find out more.

**Phone:** 07775 816 646

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/support)

**Email:** [icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## Family and Carer Support Line

Being a carer can be a lonely place. Our dedicated volunteer-run line for family, friends and carers offers you the opportunity to have a friendly chat with someone who will listen and help you get through any difficult times you may be experiencing.

You can talk to someone about the support available to you in your local area to help you take some time out from caring and focus on your own wellbeing.

Call 01865 901012, leave a message, and one of our volunteers will call you back between 11am and 12pm Monday to Friday

**Phone:** 01865 901 012

## Talking Therapy services

NHS Talking Therapies services offer a range of **free** talking therapies for people experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression. They follow a stepped care model intervention and will always start with the least intensive treatment; often a course or group.

### Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire NHS Talking Therapy Service is for people registered with an NHS Buckinghamshire GP.

**Phone:** 01865 901 600

**Text:** Text TALK to 07798 667 169

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/bucks-talking-therapies](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/bucks-talking-therapies)

### Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire NHS Talking Therapy Services is for people registered with an NHS Oxfordshire GP.

**Phone:** 01865 901 222

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies)

## Are you caring for someone with a diagnosis of dementia?

Both Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire talking therapy services offer Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for carers of people with dementia. CBT is an approach used to help people understand how their thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked.

This 12-week group can help carers reduce stress, find ways to cope with their caring role, and connect with others in similar situations.



To find out more about the programme, see website details above or contact your local NHS talking therapy service using the contact details above.

## Recovery Colleges

Carers can often experience a sense of isolation and loss of personal identity. Becoming a student at one of the Recovery Colleges can help to break this pattern. Allowing yourself some 'me time'; learning something new and re-discovering a sense of self in this non-judgemental setting can make a difference to the way you feel and how you manage everyday life along with your caring role.

The Recovery College provide free, educational courses for patients, service users and carers. Courses can help you to build up your resilience, coping-skills, and confidence. Learning something new is one of the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) and can be fun and rewarding.

**Website:** [www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/five-ways-to-wellbeing](http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/five-ways-to-wellbeing)

The Recovery Colleges may offer courses specifically and exclusively for carers, but you are welcome to sign up for any session to start on that road of discovery/re-discovery.

### Buckinghamshire

**Phone:** 01865 901 515 or 07584150 653

**Website:** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/bucksrecoverycollege](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/bucksrecoverycollege)

### Oxfordshire

**Phone:** 01865 779 613

**Website:** [www.oxfordshirerecoverycollege.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshirerecoverycollege.org.uk)

# Directory of useful contacts

## Our local carers organisations

**Carers message**  
Seek advice from the charities  
and resources available to you.

### Carers Bucks

Carers Buckinghamshire support unpaid carers in Buckinghamshire from the age of 5 to 95+. They provide advice, information, emotional support, workshops, and training.

**Phone:** 0300 777 2722  
**Website:** [www.carersbucks.org](http://www.carersbucks.org)  
**Email:** [mail@carersbucks.org](mailto:mail@carersbucks.org)

### Carers Oxfordshire

Carers Oxfordshire is a free service which offers information and support to adult carers of someone living in Oxfordshire.

**Phone:** 01235 424 715  
**Website:** [www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk)  
**Email:** [carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk)

### Swindon Carers Centre

Swindon Carers Centre support adult and older adult carers, parent carers and young carers. They help people to access support they are entitled to as a carer so they can look after their own wellbeing, living a healthy, fulfilling life alongside their caring role.

**Phone:** 01793 531 133  
**Website:** [www.swindoncarers.org.uk](http://www.swindoncarers.org.uk)  
**Email:** [info@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:info@swindoncarers.org.uk)

### Bath and North East Somerset Carers Centre

Bath and North East Somerset Carers Centre support adult and older adult carers, parent carers and young carers. They are there to help people get the best out of life and stay happy and healthy in their caring role.

**Phone:** 0800 0388 885 freephone  
**Website:** [www.banescarerscentre.org.uk](http://www.banescarerscentre.org.uk)  
**Email:** [support@banescarerscentre.org.uk](mailto:support@banescarerscentre.org.uk)

## Carer Support Wiltshire

Carer Support Wiltshire helps carers to access services, information, education and training, respite and breaks from their caring role.

**Phone:** 0800 181 4118 freephone  
**Website:** [www.carersupportwiltshire.co.uk](http://www.carersupportwiltshire.co.uk)  
**Email:** [admin@carersupportwiltshire.co.uk](mailto:admin@carersupportwiltshire.co.uk)

## Other organisations

### Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society provide advice and information to people who are supporting someone with dementia.

**Phone:** 0333 150 3456 Dementia Connect support line  
**Website:** [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

### Dementia Oxfordshire

Dementia Oxfordshire provide support and advice for people with dementia and their families.

**Phone:** 01865 410 210  
**Website:** [www.dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk)  
**Email:** [info@dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk)

### Rethink Mental Illness

If you are a carer for someone living with a mental health illness it can feel difficult to support your loved one or to get answers you might need.

**Website:** [www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub](http://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub)

### Oxfordshire Rethink Carers Support Service

Oxfordshire Rethink Carers Support Service provide emotional and practical support to unpaid mental health carers. If you are caring and supporting somebody with a mental illness, they can help and support you.

**Phone:** 01865 904 499  
**Email:** [Oxfordshirecarers@rethink.org](mailto:Oxfordshirecarers@rethink.org)

## Carers UK

Caring can present all kinds of challenges, from filling out forms to coping with emotions. Carers UK are here for you with advice, information and support every step of the way.

**Phone:** 0808 808 7777 helpline Monday to Friday

**Website:** [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

**Email:** [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org)

## BEAT Eating Disorders

BEAT Eating Disorders is the UK's eating disorder charity. Their mission is to the end the pain and suffering caused by eating disorders.

They are also there for anyone supporting someone they know who is suffering from an eating disorder. Learn more about how to help someone close to you and the carers services they offer.

**Phone:** 0808 801 0677

**Website:** [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

**Email:** [help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk](mailto:help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

## OCD UK

OCD UK has been working for children and adults affected by obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) since 2004. OCD impacts the lives of the whole family, especially those that love and care for people with OCD. OCD UK provide relatives with information and advice to help them understand and cope better with their loved ones OCD.

**Phone:** 01332 588112 helpline

**Website:** [www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

## PTSD UK

PTSD UK is the only charity in the UK dedicated to raising awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – the causes, symptoms, and treatment available no matter the trauma that caused it. When someone you care about suffers from PTSD, it affects you too. Find out more about how to help someone with PTSD and how to look after yourself too.

**Website:** [www.ptsduk.org](http://www.ptsduk.org)

## Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**Phone:** 116 123 freephone  
**Email:** [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
**Website:** [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

## MIND

It can be really worrying when someone you care about is going through a difficult time. MIND have advice to help you support other people and to look after your own wellbeing too. Visit their website for information and to find your local MIND charity in your area.

**Phone:** 0300 123 3393  
**Website:** [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
**Email:** [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

## SHOUT 85258

Available 24/7 to listen and support you to get to a calm and safe place. SHOUT is free, confidential, and anonymous. It is a service for anyone in the UK. To start a conversation, text the word 'SHOUT' to 85258.

**Website:** [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org)

## DRUGFAM

DrugFam provide a lifeline of safe and caring support for families, friends and partners affected or bereaved by a loved one's harmful use of drugs, alcohol or gambling.

**Phone:** 0300 888 3853 helpline  
**Website:** [www.drugfam.co.uk](http://www.drugfam.co.uk)

# Young carers

## Am I a young carer?

Family circumstances mean that from an early age some children and young people, under the age of 18, provide regular care and support to another family member.

Young carers often take on practical and emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult and as a result may miss out on a chance to enjoy a normal childhood, education, and life opportunities.



Some of the ways young people care for someone are:

- ✓ Helping them get up, getting washed and dressed.
- ✓ Doing the household chores like shopping, cooking and cleaning.
- ✓ Looking after siblings.
- ✓ Staying in the house to be there for the person they care for.
- ✓ Translating for their loved one if English is not their first language.

Young carers may also offer regular emotional care, such as comforting, listening and talking to the person they care for, which causes stress, worry or anxiety.

## Where can I get support locally?

Young Carers organisations can provide support to children and young people with caring responsibilities to ensure they don't miss out on their childhood.

### Young Carers Buckinghamshire

**Phone:** 0300 777 2722

**Website:** [www.carersbucks.org](http://www.carersbucks.org)

**Email:** [mail@carersbucks.org](mailto:mail@carersbucks.org)

## Be Free Young Carers Oxfordshire

**Phone:** 01235 838 554  
**Website:** [befreeyc.org.uk](http://befreeyc.org.uk)  
**Email:** [yc@befreeyc.org.uk](mailto:yc@befreeyc.org.uk)

## Swindon Carers Centre

**Phone:** 01793 401 091  
**Website:** [www.swindoncarers.org.uk/young-carers-support-in-swindon](http://www.swindoncarers.org.uk/young-carers-support-in-swindon)  
**Email:** [info@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:info@swindoncarers.org.uk)

## Bath and North East Somerset Carers Centre

**Phone:** 0800 0388 885  
**Website:** [www.banescarerscentre.org.uk/who-we-help/young-people-looking-after-someone](http://www.banescarerscentre.org.uk/who-we-help/young-people-looking-after-someone)  
**Email:** [support@banescarerscentre.org.uk](mailto:support@banescarerscentre.org.uk)

## Carer Support Wiltshire

**Phone:** 0800 181 4118 freephone  
**Website:** [carersupportwiltshire.co.uk/young-carers/](http://carersupportwiltshire.co.uk/young-carers/)  
**Email:** [admin@carersupportwiltshire.co.uk](mailto:admin@carersupportwiltshire.co.uk)

## Being a young carer: your rights

All Young Carers are entitled to an assessment of their needs. The assessment is different from the one adult carers have. It will decide what kind of help you and your family might need.

We suggest that in the first instance you speak with someone at your local carers organisation above to find out more. You can also look at the NHS website.



[www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/being-a-young-carer-your-rights/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/being-a-young-carer-your-rights/)

## Self-help resource - a carer's support plan

You may find it useful to create your own support plan. Print it and put it in a prominent place, like the fridge, where you can look at it when life starts to become difficult, or you are feeling stressed. You may also want to share it with someone close to you so they can recognise the signs if you are struggling.

- ☑ When things are going well I...
- ☑ Things that help me stay well...
- ☑ How I recognise the triggers that make me feel stressed and overwhelmed...
- ☑ How I tell when things are getting too much...
- ☑ What I can do when things are getting too much...
- ☑ In an emergency



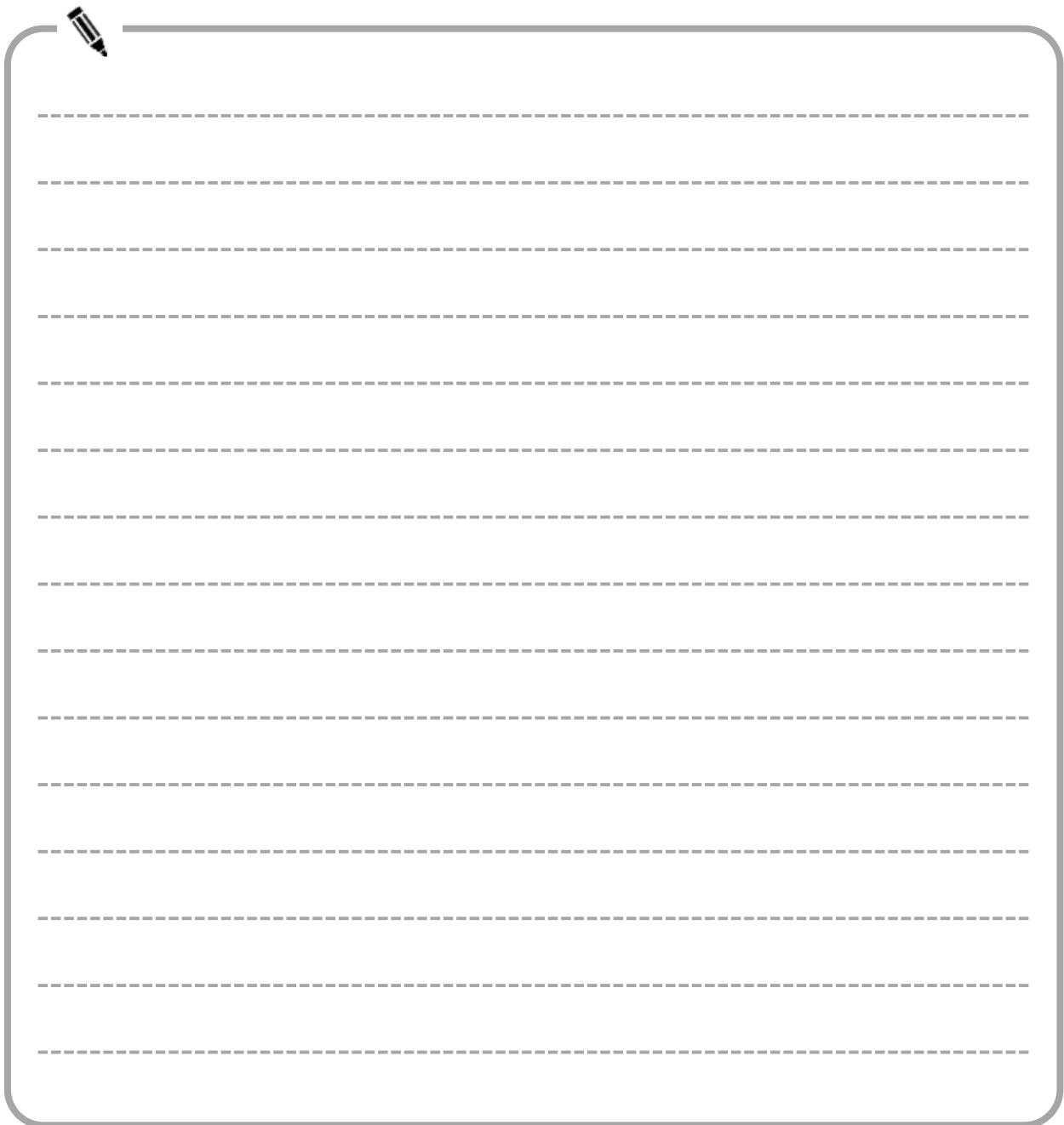


## When things are going well I...

Write down the things you need to happen for you to feel that you are coping as a carer.

Examples:

- I am eating well.
- I am sleeping well.
- I am able to take some time out for me and do things I enjoy.



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## Things that help me stay well...

Write down the things you do for yourself that make you happy and well. These could be small day-to-day things or longer-term achievements.

Examples:

- Walking the dog each day
- Chatting to carers online
- Reading a chapter of my book



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## How I recognise the triggers that make me feel stressed and overwhelmed...

Write about the times you find it hard to cope as a carer, and anything that has helped.

Examples:

- I am really tired and am not sleeping well. I can try: having a bath, playing calm music, meditating
- I don't feel like the professionals are helping me to cope. I can try: making a list of things to discuss before the next appointment
- I am worried about money. I can try: setting a realistic budget, getting some support from a money advice service



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## How I tell when things are getting too much...

Think about how your behaviour and habits change when you are finding things hard. If you do share this with someone else, they can recognise the signs that you need to support.

Examples:

- I can't sleep
- I eat and drink too much
- I am angry and snap at the person I care for
- I get headaches



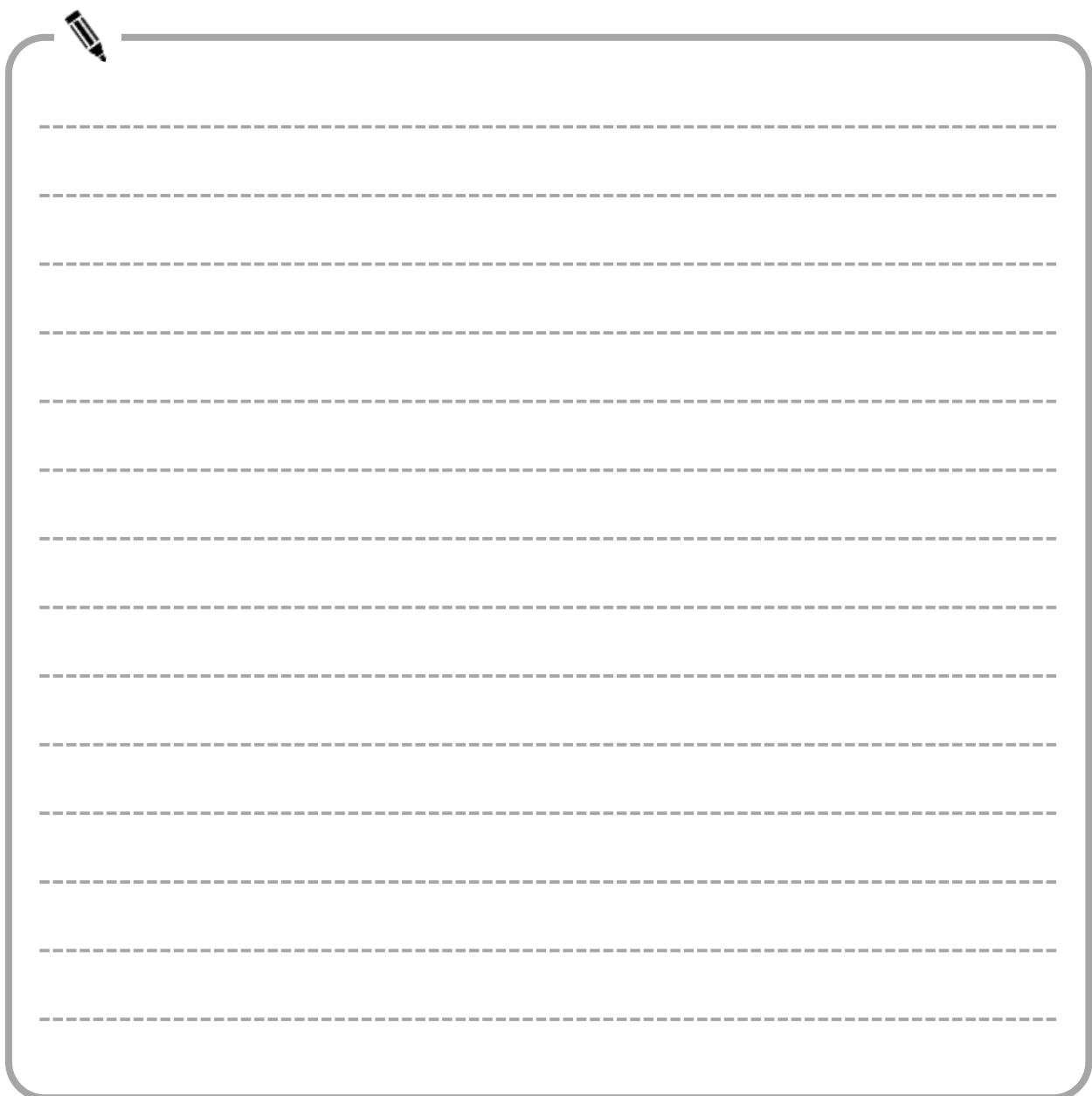
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## What I can do when things are getting too much...

Write about things that have helped you feel better when you have previously felt overwhelmed, or ideas of what you could do when problems arise.

Examples:

- Ask a friend or family member to help
- Work out what I need to do and what can wait until I feel better
- Take some time before I go to bed to reflect on my day. I can write things down so they are out of my head and I am not worrying while I am trying to sleep

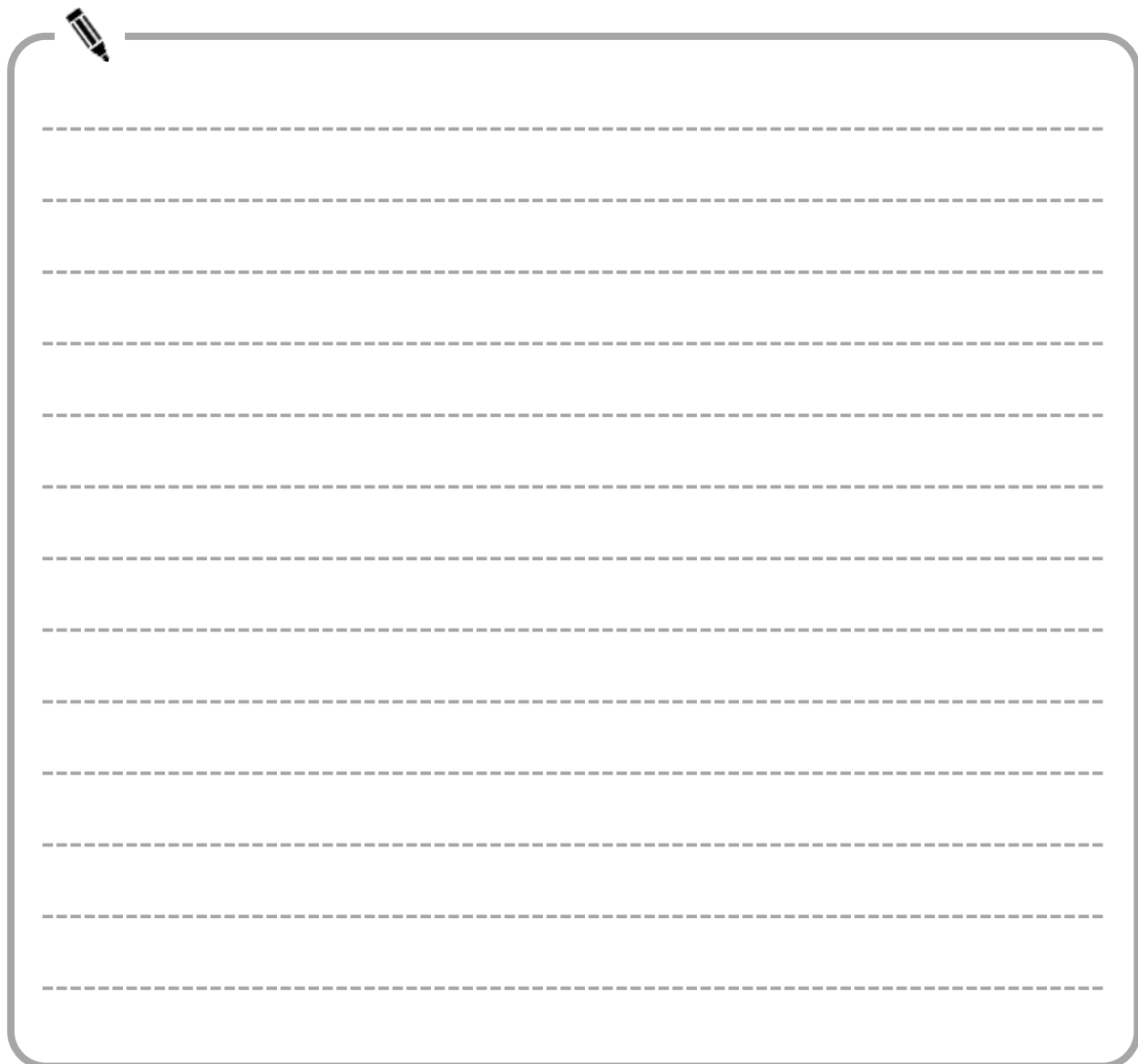


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## In an emergency

Use this section to record any information you might need in an emergency.

- Who are your emergency contacts?
- Emergency contact numbers.
- Essential information about the person you care for; medication, schedules, their needs.
- Details of the mental health team, keyworker and GP.
- How long can you safely leave your loved one unsupervised or unattended?



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You may want to continue our support plan on another sheet.

# Understanding a mental health diagnosis

Caring for someone with a mental health condition can be daunting and confusing, especially if you are new to the caring role.

Here are some of the common mental health conditions our patients are diagnosed with, we hope the following explains a little bit about some of these.

As with any illness, patients may experience a wide range of symptoms which might differ in severity from person to person.

## Anxiety disorders

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.

Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal.

But some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can affect their daily lives.

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder)

## Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder is a mental health condition that affects your moods, which can swing from one extreme to another. It used to be known as manic depression.

People with Bipolar Disorder have episodes of:

- Depression – feeling low and lethargic.
- Mania – feeling very high and overactive.

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder depend on which mood you are experiencing.

Unlike simple mood swings, each extreme episode of bipolar disorder can last for several weeks (or even longer).

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/bipolar-disorder](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/bipolar-disorder)



## Depression

Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms.

They range from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things you used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many people with depression also have symptoms of anxiety.

There can be physical symptoms too, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, having no appetite, and various aches and pains.

The symptoms of depression range from mild to severe. At its mildest, you may simply feel persistently low in spirit, while severe depression can make you feel suicidal, that life is no longer worth living.

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/depression-in-adults](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/depression-in-adults)

## Eating Disorders

An eating disorder is a mental health condition where you use the control of food to cope with feelings and other situations.

Unhealthy eating behaviours may include eating too much or too little or worrying about your weight or body shape.

The most common eating disorders are:

- **Anorexia nervosa** – trying to control your weight by not eating enough food, exercising too much, or both.
- **Bulimia** – losing control over how much you eat and then taking drastic action to not put on weight.
- **Binge eating disorder (BED)** – eating large portions of food until you feel uncomfortably full.

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/eating-disorders](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/eating-disorders)

## Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

OCD is a common mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours.

An obsession is an unwanted and unpleasant thought, image or urge that repeatedly enters your mind, causing feelings of anxiety, disgust or unease.

A compulsion is a repetitive behaviour or mental act that you feel you need to do to temporarily relieve the unpleasant feelings brought on by the obsessive thought.

OCD can affect men, women, or children. It can be distressing and significantly interfere with your life, but treatment can help to keep it under control.

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd)

## Personality Disorders

A person with a Personality Disorder thinks, feels, behaves, or relates to others very differently from the average person.

There are several different types of Personality Disorder. These are grouped into categories, suspicious, emotional, and impulsive and anxious.

Symptoms may vary on the type of personality disorder.

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/personality-disorder](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/personality-disorder)

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is an anxiety disorder caused by a very stressful, frightening, or distressing events. Someone with PTSD often relives the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability, and guilt. They may also have problems sleeping, such as insomnia and find concentrating difficult. These symptoms are often severe and persistent enough to have a significant impact on a person's day to day life.

### Learn more:

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd)

## Psychosis

Psychosis is when people lose some contact with reality.

The 2 main symptoms of Psychosis are:

**Hallucinations** – where a person hears, sees and, in some cases, feels, smells or tastes things that do not exist outside their mind but can feel very real to the person affected by them; a common hallucination is hearing voices.

**Delusions** – where a person has string beliefs that are not shared by others; a common delusion is someone believing there is a conspiracy to harm them.

The combination of hallucinations and delusional thinking can cause severe distress and a change in behaviour.

Experiencing the symptoms of Psychosis is often referred to as having a psychotic episode.

**Learn more:**

[www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/psychosis](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/psychosis)

## Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a severe long-term mental health condition. It can cause a range of psychological symptoms. Doctors often describe schizophrenia as a type of psychosis. This means the person may not always be able to distinguish their own thoughts and ideas from reality.

Symptoms of schizophrenia include:

- **Hallucinations** – hearing or seeing things that do not exist outside of the mind
- **Delusions** – unusual beliefs not based on reality
- Muddled thoughts based on hallucinations or delusions
- Losing interest in everyday activities
- Not caring about personal hygiene
- Wanting to avoid people, including friends

**Learn more:** [www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/schizophrenia](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/schizophrenia)

## Drug and alcohol addiction

Substance misuse refers to the harmful use of substances for non-medical purposes.

People who misuse substances do it regardless of the consequences because they might enjoy the feelings they get, or they use substances as a way of escaping painful and distressing thoughts.

Some substances can be physically addictive so for people who misuse them regularly it can be extremely hard to stop, and they will have withdrawal symptoms if they do not take the substance.

Substance misuse and dependence can be associated with mental health illness.

If you are the parent, partner, or carer of someone who misuses drugs or alcohol, you may feel worried, frustrated and alone. For advice and support, you can contact:

### One Recovery Buckinghamshire

**Phone:** 0300 772 9672

**Website:** [www.onerecoverybucks.org](http://www.onerecoverybucks.org)

### Turning Point Oxfordshire

**Phone:** 01865 261 690

**Website:** [www.turning-point.co.uk/services/oxfordshire](http://www.turning-point.co.uk/services/oxfordshire)

### DrugFAM

**Phone:** 0300 888 3853 helpline

**Website:** [www.drugfam.co.uk](http://www.drugfam.co.uk)

### NHS website

Visit the NHS website for information on other mental health conditions.

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions)

# Understanding medication

You may be caring for someone who is prescribed medication to help with their illness. There is a lot of evidence that shows taking medicines for mental health illnesses can help reduce the time that someone is unwell.

People will only be prescribed medication if their care team believe it is the right option for them. Like all medicines, some of the drugs can have side effects and these will be discussed fully with the patient.

The patient will be monitored very closely by their team when they are prescribed any new drug to ensure they are responding to it well.

If patients have any queries about any aspect of their medication, they can ask their keyworker. The keyworker/care team will have detailed knowledge about the medications that we use but they also have access to specialist mental health pharmacists, so can liaise with them on the patient's behalf if there is something that needs a more specialist response.

You can also speak with our health professionals if you have any questions.

Patient Information Leaflets (PILS) are available on the Choice and Medication website and give information about taking or using specific medications.

**Website:** [www.choiceandmedication.org/oxfordhealth](http://www.choiceandmedication.org/oxfordhealth)



# Benefits and entitlements

Many carers do not see themselves as being a carer and therefore they do not realise their entitlement to claim a range of benefits. There are many types of benefits available, depending on your situation.

## Carers allowance

The carer's allowance is a financial benefit to help you look after someone who needs to be cared for.

**Carers message**  
Seek help and support when applying for benefits.

You do not need to be related to or live with the person you are caring for to receive this allowance but you must meet certain eligibility conditions, and you must spend at least 35 hours a week undertaking your caring role.

There is information on the government website. You can also call the freephone benefit enquiry line.

**Phone:** 0800 882 200

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/carers-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance)

## Carer's credit

A weekly benefit for carers, filling the gaps in your national insurance (NI) contributions. If you have to give up work to care for someone, you might be worried that not paying NI will lower your state pension. If you care for someone for at least 20hrs per week there is a system in place to protect your entitlement.

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/carers-credit](http://www.gov.uk/carers-credit)

## Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – support for the person you care for

PIP can help with extra living costs if the person has both:

- ✓ a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability
- ✓ difficulty doing certain everyday tasks or getting around because of their condition

People can get PIP even if they're working, have savings or are getting most other benefits.

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/pip](http://www.gov.uk/pip)

You can get more information and advice on what benefits you may be entitled to from the following organisations:

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

**Phone:** 0800 1448 848 (national)

**Website:** [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### **Benefits (Gov.uk)**

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)

You may find it easier talking it through with someone, so speak to your local Carers' Organisation.

# Glossary

## Most frequently encountered acronyms

AMHP	Approved Mental Health Practitioner
AMHT	Adult Mental Health Team
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CMHT	Community Mental Health Team
CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
CTM	Clinical Team Meeting
CTO	Community Treatment Order
CTR	Care and Treatment Review
DBT	Dialectic Behavioural Therapy
EDS	Eating Disorder Service
EIS	Early Intervention Service
EUPD	Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder
HNA	Health Needs Assessment
LD	Learning Disabilities
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
MHA	Mental Health Act 1983 as amended by the Mental Health Act 2007
NR	Nearest relative (defined in MHA)
OT	Occupational Therapist/Therapy
RMN	Registered Mental Nurse
SW	Social Worker



## Who's who?

### Advocate / Advocacy

A person or a service which assists people to say what they want. People can advocate for themselves or have an independent person advocate on their behalf. POhWER is the local advocacy service for our areas.

### Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP)

Trained in the legal aspects of mental health assessment and treatment and approved by the local authority social services department to organise and carry out assessments under the Mental Health Act 1983.

### Keyworker

A named individual designated as the main point of contact and support for a person who has a need for ongoing care. The Keyworker can be of any profession: nurse, doctor, social worker, psychologist. For patients in community services only and where appropriate the keyworker could be a peer support worker or support worker if they are providing most care and support.

### Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) / Community Mental Health Nurse (CMHN)

A registered nurse with specialist training who works in the community. Most CPNs work as part of a Community Mental Health Team.

### Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

A team made up of a range of health and social care workers combining their skills who are involved in the service user's care.

### Consultant Psychiatrist

A qualified medical doctor who has taken further training and specialises in mental illness. The consultant psychiatrist is the most senior member of the care team with overall responsibility for patient assessment and care.

### Psychologist

Clinical psychologists are involved with assessment and treatment of mental health conditions. Counselling psychologists can offer talking treatments to help individuals manage mental and emotional problems.

## **Psychotherapist**

A trained professional who assists people with various mental health conditions, including depression, addiction, anxiety and bipolar disorder and other debilitating feelings.

They are specifically trained to listen carefully and analyse the psychological needs of their patients and help them accordingly.

## **Support Worker**

Part of the care team and helps people meet their recovery goals.

## **Social Worker**

A professional who can help with practical matters, such as day care, accommodation, welfare, and benefits. Most social workers will work as part of the mental health team. They work closely with other organisations that can also provide help.

# Mental Capacity

## What is mental capacity?

Having mental capacity means being able to make and communicate your own decisions.

Someone may lack mental capacity if they cannot:

- Understand information about a particular decision
- Remember that information long enough to make the decision
- Weigh up the information to make the decision or communicate the decision

## What can cause a lack of mental capacity?

Lack of mental capacity can be caused by many things, it can be:

- ✔ **Temporary**, where someone has capacity at some times but not others. This could be due to a mental health problem, substance or alcohol misuse or confusion.
- ✔ **Permanent**, where someone's ability to make decisions is always affected. This could be due to a stroke or brain injury, severe dementia or learning disability.

## What is Power of Attorney (PoA)?

PoA is a legal document that allows the named person to deal with the affairs of another person and they have chosen to appoint them as their attorney. It includes decisions around financial affairs.

The most common type of PoA is a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). This is drawn up whilst the person still has mental capacity, to give permission for the person to deal with their affairs after they lose mental capacity. There are two types of LPA:

- ✔ **Health and welfare** – gives the attorney the authority to make decisions about the person's personal welfare and healthcare.
- ✔ **Property and financial affairs** – gives the attorney the authority to make decisions about the person's financial affairs.

Your local carers organisation may be able to help with this.

For free advice on legal matters contact the citizen advice bureau (CAB) in your area. Find your local service on their website.

**Website:** [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

# Mental Health Legislation

## The Mental Health Act

The Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA) provides the legal framework that allows some people who are unwell to be admitted to hospital and have the appropriate care and treatment, including medication.

## Sections

There are lots of different sections under the MHA but the most used ones for adult mental health patients are:

**Section 2:** This allows someone who is at risk of either harm to themselves or others to be admitted to hospital for up to 28 days. During this time, they will be assessed, and treatment and medication may be given.

**Section 3:** This allows someone who is at risk of either harm to themselves or to others, to be admitted for up to six months. During this time, they will be assessed and treatment and medication may be given.

**Section 136:** This allows someone to be taken to a place of safety by police (which might be a designated area on one of our wards or a police station) if it is felt they might have a mental illness and need care or support. Someone can be on this section for up to 24 hours to allow them to be assessed and might then be admitted to hospital or referred to one of our services for ongoing support.

**Section 5(2)** is a temporary holding power which gives doctors the ability to detain a service user for up to 72 hours. This would be used when the person is already accessing mental health care on an informal or voluntary basis and there is increased concern about a deterioration in their mental health.

It could be that they no longer have capacity to remain informally or that they have become a risk to themselves, or others and it would not be safe for them to leave the ward. During these 72 hours a Mental Health Act assessment will be completed by an Approved Mental Health Professional and Doctors who will decide if the person needs further detention under Section 2 or 3 of the Mental Health Act or whether the section 5(2) can be rescinded, and the service-user can remain in hospital on a voluntary basis.

## **Informal admission / voluntary admission**

A voluntary, or informal admission as it is sometimes known, is an admission under a person's own free will. Usually, a person will be assessed by their mental health team before an informal admission is offered, however this will depend on how unwell they are.

People offered a voluntary admission commonly have the capacity to make their own decisions to consent to treatment. A person can only be admitted on a voluntary basis by going through the correct process.

## **Community Treatment Order (CTO)**

This allows some people who have been detained on an eligible section of the MHA to be discharged back to the community with conditions in place.

## **Community Treatment Order (CTO) recall**

If the conditions of the CTO are not followed, the responsible clinician for the service user can recall them back to hospital. The service user can be held for up to 72 hours. During this time their responsible clinician will decide what will be the best care approach for the service user.

This can include staying in hospital on a voluntary basis to receive the required treatment for their mental disorder or to be allowed back into the community to continue their treatment.

But if it is decided the service user requires further compulsory hospital admission, their CTO will be revoked and they will be detained under their original section of the Mental Health Act.

## Nearest Relative

The MHA gives rights to the “Nearest Relative” of the person who has been detained. The nearest relative is not the same as a Next of Kin. They must be over the age of 18, legally reside in the UK and follow the below hierarchy which is set out in the MHA:

- 1** Spouse or Civil Partner (or partner if living together for over six months)
- 2** Son or Daughter
- 3** Father or Mother
- 4** Brother or Sister
- 5** Grandparent
- 6** Grandchild
- 7** Uncle or Aunt
- 8** Nephew or Niece
- 9** People who have lived with the detained person for over five years

The Nearest Relative can delegate the role to someone else, and if the person receiving care has no-one that fits the above criteria the courts can appoint someone to act in this role.

The MHA is a very complex area of the law, especially around the role of the Nearest Relative when there may be another family member or person who you may feel is better placed to fulfil this role.

If you require detailed information or have any questions, please contact Oxford Health’s Mental Health Act Administration Office on 01865 902 036.

## What is Guardianship?

Guardianship Orders are rarely used. They help support people suffering from a mental disorder to live outside of hospital. A patient can only be placed under Guardianship if two doctors say that the requirements in the Act are met and an Approved Mental Health Professional makes an application.

For more detailed information regarding Guardianship Orders, please contact the Oxford Health’s Mental Health Act Office on 01865 902 036 or the Local Authority.

# Getting involved

Oxford Health is committed to involving patients, families and carers in continually improving the quality of the services we provide.

You can get involved at any age and at any point in your journey if you feel able. Involvement is for everyone.

As a carer of someone who uses our services we want to make sure that your voice is heard.

## **Carers message**

This may not be the right time now but consider this in the future.

## Why get involved?

- ✔ To use personal experiences of healthcare to help improve quality
- ✔ To give opinions in a measured way
- ✔ To use skills to improve healthcare services
- ✔ Used lived experiences to empower others and educate staff
- ✔ Have a keen interest in bringing about service improvement and being eager to make a difference.

## What can I get involved with?

Oxford Health has a range of involvement opportunities available, and this is growing all the time. Some activities include:

- ✔ Interviewing potential new staff members
- ✔ Presenting a personal healthcare story to help the trust learn from your experiences
- ✔ Reviewing and developing essential information such as leaflets, posters and websites
- ✔ Helping to develop and deliver training for our staff
- ✔ Participating in a focus group to give your views on a specific topic

## **Carers message**

Help to make change for the better.



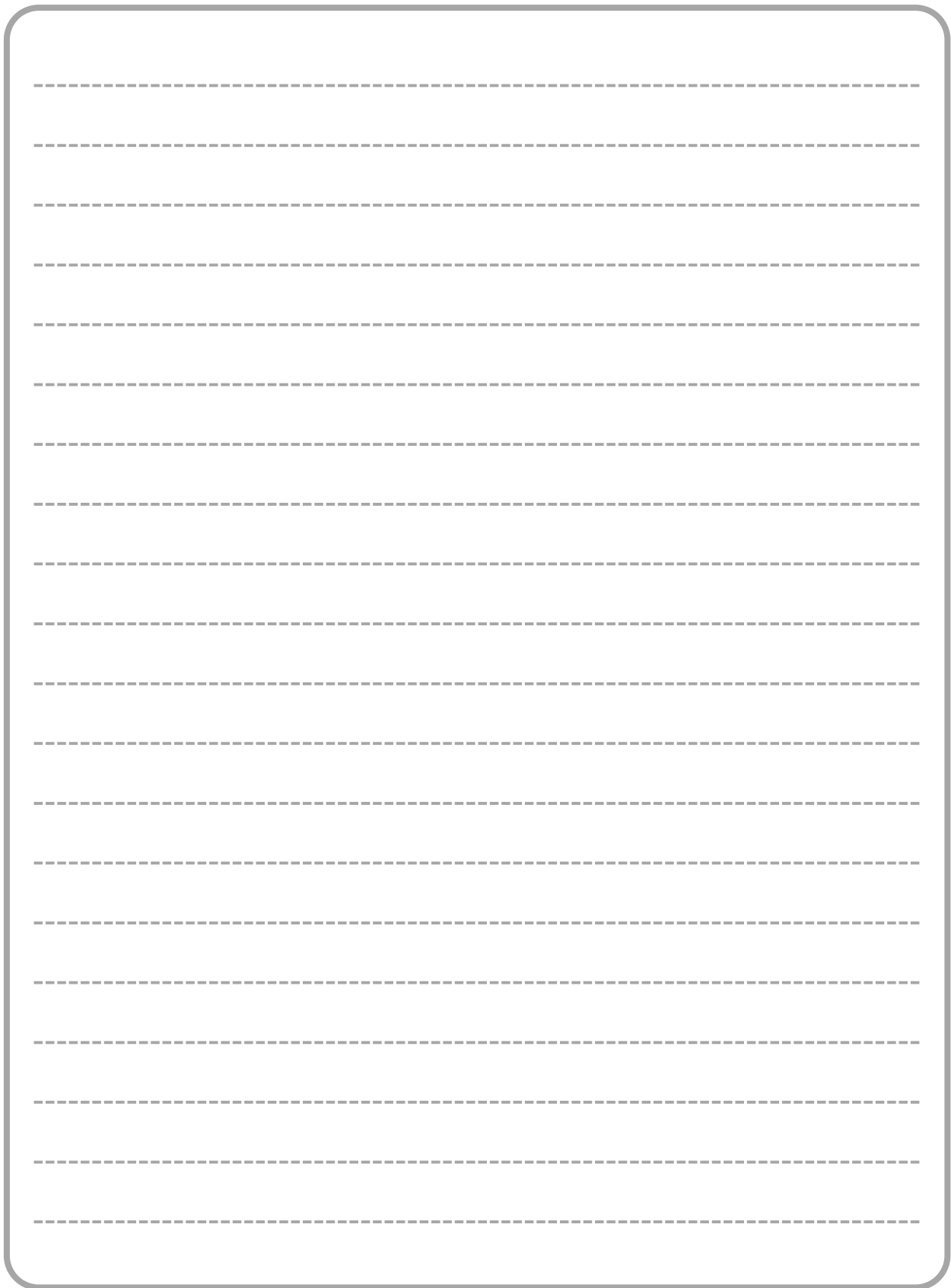


The benefits that involvement can bring include:

- ✔ Empowerment
- ✔ Being listen to and having your voice heard
- ✔ Reimbursement
- ✔ Meeting new people and social benefits
- ✔ Gaining new skills
- ✔ Making a difference
- ✔ Improving others' experiences

If you want more information or want to get involved contact [icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:icareyoucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## Notes page



A large rounded rectangular box with a grey border, containing 20 horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.



An accessible version of this handbook can be found on our website:

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/handbook](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/carers/handbook)

## Get in touch

Address      Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust  
Trust Headquarters  
Littlemore Mental Health Centre  
Sandford Road, Oxford OX4 4XN

Phone        01865 901 000

Email        [enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

Website     [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

## Feedback

Please get in touch if you have any feedback or have any questions about the content of this handbook

Email        [icareoyucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:icareoyucare@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone        0800 328 7971

Email        [PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

Become a member of our foundation trust: [www.ohftnhs.uk/membership](http://www.ohftnhs.uk/membership)