



A checklist for carers of people with mental health problems

Working in partnership with psychiatrists and carers

Questions to ask the psychiatrist

Carers need information and psychiatrists are busy. Carers may not always find out what they need to know about the person they are caring for. This checklist is designed to help you get all the information you need about the diagnosis and treatment of the person you care for.

You may be able to get some of this information from other members of the clinical team involved, or from written information that they can provide.

If the person gives you permission, the psychiatrist will be able to give you information about their condition and care.

Although you may not want to ask all the questions listed, you may find that they help you in preparing to meet the psychiatrist and the mental health 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
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the diagnosis or problem?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a diagnosis has not yet been made, what are the possibilities?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Why has this happened to them?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will they recover?
	If a diagnosis has been made
<input type="checkbox"/>	What symptoms suggest this diagnosis/illness?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is known about the causes of this disorder/illness?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is likely to happen in the future? Will it get better or worse?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where can I get written information about this disorder?
	About the assessment
<input type="checkbox"/>	What assessments have already been done?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any other assessments that might be needed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any physical problems that have been discovered? If so, what will need to be done?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have culture and background been considered?
Care Programme Approach (CPA)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the CPA?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What does the CPA mean?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the person on the CPA? If not, why not?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will I be involved in the CPA?
About care and treatment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What are the aims of the care and treatment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is a care co-ordinator?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What part will the care coordinator play in the person's care?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who else will be involved in the treatment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is your plan for treatment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	For how long will they need treatment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would talking treatments (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy , family therapy) be helpful? If so, are they available locally?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What happens if they refuse treatment?
Sharing of information	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you asked them about how much information they are happy to share with me?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will I be informed about important meetings concerning their care and treatment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can I see you on my own?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would you like to ask me for any other information about them or the family?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can I tell you things that will not be shared with the person or other members of staff?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are their views on confidentiality clearly marked in their notes?
Care and treatment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What can I do to help?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any local self-help or carers' groups that can help me understand the illness?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How can I get advice and training in the day-to-day management of the illness?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any local groups that can provide support?
	Getting help
<input type="checkbox"/>	How can I get in touch with you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How do I arrange to see you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who do I contact if I'm worried about their behaviour?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What do I do if I'm worried that they are becoming ill again?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who do I contact in an emergency? What help might be available?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How can I get a second opinion?
	Carers
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the difference between a carer, a nearest relative and a nominated person?
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that, as a carer, I am entitled to an assessment and care plan of my own. Who should I speak to?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If I have specific needs of my own, who should I ask?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If I need help, to whom should I turn?
	Medication
<input type="checkbox"/>	What medication is to be used, and how?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the lowest effective dose being prescribed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can a low dose be taken at first and increased if necessary?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How often will the medication be reviewed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will I be involved in future discussions about the dose or type of medication?
	What should the benefits of this medication be?
<input type="checkbox"/>	In the short-term
<input type="checkbox"/>	In the long-term
	What are the possible side-effects of this medication?
<input type="checkbox"/>	In the short-term
<input type="checkbox"/>	In the long-term
	Managing the medication
<input type="checkbox"/>	Why have you chosen this particular medication?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How long will the medication have to be taken for?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any other medications that could be used if this one does not work?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What symptoms might mean that the dose should be changed?

<input type="checkbox"/>	What should I do if they experience unpleasant side-effects
<input type="checkbox"/>	What will happen if they stop taking the medication?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have any written information about this medications to give me?
	Hospital treatment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do they need to be admitted to hospital? If so, for how long?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If they have to go into hospital, which one will it be?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will they be on a locked ward?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If they get short-term leave from hospital, when and how will I be informed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How often will I be able to see them?
	Discharge from hospital
<input type="checkbox"/>	What arrangements will be made for their care and monitoring after discharge from hospital?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If I am not able to look after the person when they are discharged, what will happen?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Am I expected to help with anything, especially medication?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you know of any self-help techniques that will help their recovery?
	If not admitted to hospital
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do they need to be admitted to hospital?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any alternatives to hospital admission?

Any other questions

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Further help

Carers' Trust

Carers Trust is a charity which was formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care in April 2012. Carers Trust works to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or

friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems. With our Network Partners, we aim to ensure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

This leaflet was produced as part of the Partners in Care campaign, a joint initiative between the Royal College of Psychiatrists and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

One of the aims of the Partners in Care campaign was to show that if all those involved in the care of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities can work together, a trusting partnership can be developed between carers, patients and professionals which will be of benefit to all.

Editor: Dr Philip Timms, chair, Royal College of Psychiatrists' Public Education Editorial Board.

Carer input: Members of the Princess Royal Trust for Carers

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