

Carers' Strategy

September 2010

Corporate

Together we are better

Developed in partnership with
Manchester Carers Forum



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1. Introduction

Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust recognises the essential role that carers take on in supporting people with mental health problems across the city and in working in partnership with the Trust to improve the services we provide. The Trust also recognises the impact that caring responsibilities place on carers and that there is therefore sometimes a need to provide support to help people in their caring role. Support from family members, friends or neighbours is often critically important for people with mental health problems. Caring for someone can be a rewarding experience but it can also be very challenging.

Caring responsibilities can impact upon family life, friendships and social relations. They can also affect health and wellbeing, finances, and the ability to work or pursue education or leisure activities. There are 6 million carers in the UK, providing unpaid care for ill, frail or disabled family members, friends and partners, and every day, another six thousand people take on a caring responsibility (Carers UK) and this number is likely to increase as the population expands and ages. Within their 2007 report, Carers UK estimated that carers save the country £87 billion a year; which amounts to around £15,000 per carer per year.

Across Manchester, it has been estimated that approximately 22% of the adult population have responsibilities as a Carer¹. With approximately 375000 adults living within Manchester² this means that there is anything up to 82500 people, who provide a range of emotional and practical forms of support and, without this, many people would not be able to live independent or fulfilling lives. The Trust is fully committed to engaging with carers at a range of different levels, to reflect their ever-changing and variable roles. This includes making a pledge to treat carers with respect and dignity and to ensure that carers' needs, views and interests are represented at the most senior levels within the organisation, including on the Trust's Council of Governors.

2. Purpose of this strategy

This strategy will explain and set out the Trust's vision for working with and supporting carers in Manchester. It will clearly outline our priorities, which will be identified within the strategy as aims and pledges. This strategy will be delivered by an action plan which will outline what actions are needed to improve services for carers. The action plan will also provide details of how we will deliver our aims and pledges to carers including the monitoring processes and timescales that apply.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this strategy 'a carer is someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a partner, child, relative, friend or neighbour, who could not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. The term carer should not be confused with a care worker, or care assistant, who receives payment for looking after someone'³. This definition applies to those people providing support to individuals who receive care and treatment from the Trust. This definition reflects the personal and ever-changing nature of caring roles. A broad definition is particularly important in mental health caring where the support provided may not be always be visible and may vary over time and even on a day to day basis.

¹ Manchester City Council Carers Strategy and Commissioning Strategy

² Figures provided by the Population Estimates Unit at the Office of National Statistics projected within their mid year estimate

³ The Princess Royal Trust for Carers definition

Carers provide the support they do without payment and sometimes without recognition or thanks. Carers also undertake a very wide ranging number of caring responsibilities, dependent upon their individual circumstances. These can include:

- **Helping someone to access services and get the support they need**
- **Helping someone to deal with the difficult emotions and other problems caused by the illness**
- **Helping to identify signs of relapse, and provide support that helps prevent an admission to hospital**
- **Providing practical, physical, emotional and sometimes financial support to vulnerable people**
- **'Supervising' someone to keep them safe**
- **Monitoring someone and ensuring they adhere to treatment**

4. Guiding Principles

The Trust recognises the important role that carers take on, and is committed to ensuring that carers are supported and engaged as meaningful partners in using their own experiences to inform how Trust services are developed, in the planning and delivery of care and treatment and in evaluating care and treatment from a carer's perspective.

The following section identifies seven guiding principles relating to good practice that underpin this strategy; and are to be at the forefront of our work with carers

i. Recognition and understanding of role and experience

Carers should be clearly recognised in their role, particularly in relation to the important value of their contribution to health and social care for people in need. As individuals, all carers have different needs and should be able to access a range of practical and emotional support to help them in their role. The need to involve carers in monitoring services and the importance of taking into account their knowledge and experiences in the evaluation of services in Manchester should also be recognised.

ii. 'Having a voice' – maximizing carer involvement and engagement

Carers should always be involved in planning and monitoring the services they receive to properly reflect their differing social, cultural and practical needs. Through this strategy, the Trust will continue to explore creative ways to involve carers as important partners in the planning process and to encourage carers to express their views about services they and the person they care for receive. Carer's views should be listened to and recorded and they should always receive feedback on their contribution including what has happened as a result.

iii. Practical Support

Carers should be provided with appropriate practical help which promotes their good health and includes opportunities for short and longer breaks. The practical support needs of carers should be met through good assessment procedures, tailoring services to individual needs to include the development of a wider range of innovative and flexible support services. All carers are able to apply for a carers assessment, as it is important that the needs of carers within a caring environment are assessed and that appropriate support is identified and put into place. Following from this assessment, some carers will also be eligible to apply for a carers individual budget, which can be used to provide respite, leisure activities or domestic equipment etc. Other forms of practical support would include providing information to carers around crisis planning, as well as details around treatment and medications, whenever this is appropriate.

There are a wide range of assessments available to carers. Further information can be obtained by using the contact details outlined in section 10 of this strategy.

iv. Choice

Choice should apply to all carers in Manchester as to whether or not to take on or continue their caring role and whether or not to become involved in the assessment of the person they care for. Carers also should have a right to choose to have an assessment of their own needs and to be involved in planning services that they and the person they care for receive. This information should include information about relevant charges and any entitlements that may be available.

v. Access to Information

Carers should have access to a wide range of information to support them in their role. This information should be easily accessible, particularly in times of crisis, and available in a range of languages and formats. Carers should have access to information about all relevant services such as carer's assessments including information about relevant charges and any entitlements available.

vi. Minimising the impact of costs and charging

The financial cost to the carer resulting from their caring role should be minimised by ensuring information and advice on benefits and entitlements throughout caring is available, and that carers are signposted to other services across Manchester that may be able to advise on costs or offer alternatives to specific services. Wherever appropriate, carers should be supported in accessing paid employment and leisure opportunities alongside their caring role.

vii. Coordination and Partnership

Services and information should be coordinated across Manchester in order to best meet the needs of carers. Policies, practices and services at different levels and across different agencies should be carer focused. Wherever possible and subject to confidentiality and choice, relevant information that would be of benefit to carers should be shared between agencies.

5. Key legislation and guidance

There is a range of legislation and national guidance that needs to be taken into account when delivering services and providing support to carers including the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and the Carers Equal Opportunities Act 2004⁴, the New Deal for Carers announced in February 2007 and the Equality Act 2010. Further details on the wider range of key carer legislation and guidance can be obtained by using the contact details outlined in section 10 of this strategy.

6. Our aims for supporting and working with carers in Manchester

The Trust's overall aim is to develop ways of working that ensure that carers feel supported, informed and involved in the care of the service user wherever possible. Carers should be recognised and valued for the invaluable job that they do, and feel supported to continue in their role if they are happy to do so.

⁴ This is the legislation that underpins the responsibility of an authority to ensure that carers have access to paid employment and leisure opportunities. It also places a duty on the local authority to inform carers of their right to an assessment and provides for health and adult social care, education and housing to work together to support carers.

This strategy sets out a series of aims and pledges which describe our commitment to supporting and engaging with carer's, including how we intend to deliver on this. These aims include:

- Aim 1. Improving how we communicate with carers**
- Aim 2. Providing better information to carers**
- Aim 3. Improving the ways in which we involve carers**
- Aim 4. Improving the ways that the Trust supports carers**
- Aim 5. Further development of Trust workforce in working with carers**
- Aim 6. Supporting carers who may also be employees of the Trust**

Aim 1. Improving how we communicate with carers

Pledge: Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust will ensure that up to date accurate information is provided to carers in suitable and accessible formats. This information will be appropriate both for the carer and for the service user that they support and will be provided at the point when it is needed for example after diagnosis, during treatment or at the point of discharge. The Trust will also develop mechanisms to allow for more direct communication with carers and for capturing the experience of carers so that their views, experiences and needs can be acted upon. The Trust will do this by:

- Producing a leaflet for carers, outlining where they can access support, advice and guidance , particularly in times of crisis, as well as the choices and options that are available to them
- Ensuring that carers are aware of key staff at the Trust including Carer Support Workers and ensuring that carers know how to contact key staff whenever appropriate
- Ensuring that all carers are aware of the Trust Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and other local organisations that can provide support, help and guidance to carers in Manchester
- Ensuring that carers are aware of local meetings planned across Manchester in order that they can share their views, experiences and concerns
- Ensuring that local carer groups and organisations across Manchester are aware of the Trust's service user & carer engagement forum including carers from the different equality groups, and that they can bring issues to the attention of this group when appropriate
- Ensuring that carers are able to comment on Trust services at key Trust buildings and services through the use of comments cards and feedback boxes
- Conducting an annual carers audit in order to have a better understanding of carer issues and to respond to any key issues when required
- Ensuring that the experience of carers is captured in key Trust documents, including the annual report, and that actions taken to improve key issues are clearly outlined.

Aim 2 Improving the information we provide to carers

Pledge: Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust will work towards providing carers with clear information about our range of services and about the support that may be available to meet their individual circumstances. The Trust will also ensure that carers are better informed about any local developments that impact upon carers. The Trust will do this by:

- Ensuring that carers have access to information about Trust services including how they can be accessed
- Developing carer information packs in each of our main in-patient settings
- Ensuring that carers have access to Trust information regarding medications and any associated side effects
- Improving the quality of care plans provided to those carers who undertake carers assessments so that they contain information relevant to their individual support needs
- Ensuring that care plans take into account how to access support in times of crisis
- Introducing a carers micro site onto the Trust internet, and engaging with carers to develop appropriate content
- Continuing to develop links with local organisations providing support to carers sharing any links or contacts with carers when appropriate
- Ensuring that the Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) service continues to be actively promoted to local carer support organisations
- Involving carers in improving Care Programme Approach (CPA) processes and documents so that they are more responsive to carers – particularly in times of crisis
- Ensure that key Trust (or other) developments affecting carers are communicated to carers and that they are able to respond if necessary
- Continue to review Trust information technology systems so that they are better able to capture the needs and preferences of carers
- Ensuring that carers are always involved in local service development meetings
- Ensuring that the experience of carers is used to improve develop or improve any Trust information relevant to carers
- Ensuring that all carers are signposted to publications that may be useful to their particular caring need and their individual circumstances

Aim 3 Improving the ways in which we involve carers

Pledge: Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust will make a commitment to improving how we involve and engage with carers in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our care and treatment to service users. The Trust will work towards achieving this by:

- Ensuring that carers interests are represented on the Council of Governors
- Putting in place a range of local meetings, and ensuring that they are promoted to and attended by local carers representative of the communities the Trust serves.
- Developing the Trust's service user and carer engagement forum, and ensuring that local carer groups are able to link into it
- Ensuring that carers are aware of the different mechanisms and opportunities for providing feedback and sharing their experiences as carers with staff at the Trust
- Reviewing the role and involvement of carers in Trust corporate induction and training events
- Developing an annual event for carers, service users and other stakeholders to learn from experience and share good practice
- Providing information and guidance for carers in relation to service user confidentiality, so that carers and service users are aware of their rights
- Involving carers in the development of an annual audit in order to gauge their experiences and seek to continually improve how we support carers
- Monitoring the involvement of carers within the care groups and ensuring good practice is shared across the Trust

Aim 4 Improving the ways that the Trust supports carers

Pledge: Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust will make a commitment to ensuring carers are aware of the range of support that may be available to meet their individual needs, and will seek to improve our rates of carers assessments and carer care plans. The Trust will also ensure that all carers are informed of their right to an assessment of their needs. The Trust will aim to achieve this through:

- Ensuring that carers are aware of support that may be available to them for Carer Support Workers, and understand how to contact them when appropriate
- Ensuring that all new staff at the Trust are informed of carer issues and carer experiences, so that they are better equipped to respond to their needs
- Providing regular feedback to staff on the experiences of carers and ensuring that actions are identified to address any priority areas
- Ensuring that staff at the Trust understand the range and availability of support available for carers, and how this can be accessed
- Producing information explaining carers assessments, and how these can be accessed
- Reviewing the Trust's information technology systems so that they are better able to record support offered to or received by carers
- Provide regular updates on the uptake of carers assessments, and ensure that a needs assessment is offered to all carers
- Working with local partners to ensure that new guidance or support for carers is proactively shared across the Trust

Aim 5 Further development of Trust workforce in working with carers

Pledge: Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust will make a commitment to developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of staff in our workforce to provide proactive support and guidance to local carers: The Trust will do this by

- Producing information explaining carers assessments, and how these can be accessed
- Creating opportunities for carers to work together with staff as part of the Trust's transformational work programme, as a way of improving services
- Ensuring that carers are appropriately trained and supported to become involved in delivering aspects of the corporate induction programme for all new staff recruited into the organisation
- Ensuring that all person specifications for future vacancies within the Trust include knowledge and understanding of carers issues as an essential criteria
- Involving carers in the recruitment and selection of staff at different levels into the organisation
- Ensuring that a carers perspective is built into the Trust's corporate induction programme for all new staff recruited into the organisation
- Ensuring that carers are involved within decision making and are able to influence service development at all levels within the organisation
- Ensuring that staff are invited to local meetings in order to interact with carers in order to learn from experience
- Providing regular general feedback to staff on key issues and outcomes identified from carer meetings and other general feedback

Aim 6. Supporting carers who are also employees at the Trust

Pledge: Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust will ensure that it describes the commitment to and the support available for employees who have a caring commitment away from the workplace. The Trust will also ensure that a range of supporting policies are in place, for example, special leave and career breaks in order to fully support staff with caring commitments. The Trust will do this by:

- Ensuring that a policy is in place for staff with carer responsibilities, to describe the range of support available to them
- Ensuring that Managers are encouraged to respond positively to approaches by carers for support
- Putting in place a range of supporting policies to include:
 - *Flexible Working*
 - *Special Leave*
 - *Time off for appointments with dependents*
 - *Career Break*
 - *Temporary Change to Contract*
 - *Unpaid Leave*
 - *Additional Planned Unpaid Leave*
- Ensuring that appropriate training is available to managers to support them in dealing effectively with staff who have caring responsibilities outside of the workplace
- Ensuring that the Occupational Health Department supports staff with caring commitments, by providing positive advice on a healthy balance between work and home demands, referring staff when appropriate to other agencies/services and providing other general advice.

7. Annual Action Plans and Work Programmes

The Trust recognises that this strategy must be backed up by a robust work programme and action plans, which are delivered in partnership with carers, organisations providing support and guidance to carers and Trust staff. These action plans will be updated on an annual basis. Progress against the aims outlined within this strategy will be communicated to carers in a range of different ways, including via the Trust website.

8. Monitoring and Evaluating our work with carers

In order to demonstrate that progress is being made against each of the aims outlined within this strategy, and that the principles and vision at the centre of this policy are realised, the Trust will:

- Develop a robust action plan that will clearly outline how we intend to deliver each of the aims included within this strategy, with clear actions, outcomes, responsibilities and timescales
- Ensure that progress against this strategy is monitored by the Trust's user/carer forum, and that any barriers or issues affecting its delivery are actioned
- Produce an annual carer report, to reflect on achievements, progress made and to set out an annual work plan for the next year
- Hold an annual conference for both carers and service users to share experiences of involvement and good practice and to support annual action planning and priority setting for both carers and service users

- Share success stories widely across the Trust and externally through a range of carer focused organisations
- Equality and Diversity monitoring will be carried out to inform and support service development , communication and engagement with equality groups.

9. Supporting Carers

The Trust recognises that carers will require support, advice and guidance in order that they can share their experiences and encourage the Trust to continually improve its services to carers. The Trust will work with individual carer's as appropriate to ensure that any support or training needs are identified, and that measures are put in place in order for them to become meaningfully and actively involved in service improvement and other engagement activities across the Trust. These needs will be identified through a carer's audit, which will be undertaken via a range of carer organisations and a training needs analysis, which will be undertaken with both carers and service users on the Trust's involvement register. The register needs to be representative of the communities we serve

10. Further Information

Further advice or assistance on the implementation or interpretation of this document is available if required. Please contact:

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11. Acknowledgements

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