



**Oxford Health**  
NHS Foundation Trust



Cotswold House Eating Disorder Service

# **Commonsense and Confidentiality**

# Contents

Introduction.....	3
What is a carer?.....	3
The importance of sharing information with carers .....	3
The Carers' Charter .....	6
Good Practice Checklist .....	7
What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment, or complaint about the service? .....	9
Accessibility .....	12
Get in touch.....	12
Feedback .....	12

# Introduction

This leaflet provides advice and guidance to carers, family, and friends on how information can be shared by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

## What is a carer?

A carer is someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a relative, friend, or neighbour who could not manage otherwise because of frailty, illness, or disability. This may include helping with personal care, medication, cooking, shopping, housework and giving emotional support.

## The importance of sharing information with carers

We recognise that if you are caring for a friend or family member the sharing of information between staff, and you as a carer, is vital to the care and treatment of your relative or friend.

Providing you with information about care plans and medication, and advising you on managing a crisis, may be able to help you to deal with difficult situations until other assistance is available.

## Issues with sharing information

Healthcare is a partnership between patients, carers, families, and professional care staff.

Sometimes there can be difficulties in relation to confidentiality and sharing information. When a patient wishes to withhold information these wishes must be respected by professional staff.

It is essential that you are informed of this.

Staff will ensure that you receive as much information as possible to help you in your caring role.

As an area of good practice staff will:

- Discuss with the patient what particular information they wish to withhold.
- Discuss the importance of confidentiality with you at an early stage and that views on information sharing are recorded.
- Explain to you what information can be shared and if information can not be shared, the reasons for this.
- Explain they are bound by law and professional codes of conduct and have a duty of confidentiality to their patients.

Staff will also explain that they have the same duty of confidentiality to you as a carer in relation to any information you wish to discuss.

## How can information be shared?

Issues around confidentiality should not be used as a reason for not listening to you or for not discussing fully with patients the need for you to receive information so that you can continue to support them.

You should be given enough information in a way that you can readily understand to help you to provide care efficiently.

Even when the patient continues to withhold consent, you must be given enough knowledge to enable you to provide effective care from an early stage.

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any difficulties you are experiencing in your caring role with the professional who is working with the patient.

## The provision of general information

The provision of general information about mental illness, emotional and practical support does not breach confidentiality.

General information can include:

- Information about the condition and behaviour it may cause.
- Advice on managing the behaviour, particularly in a crisis.
- Contact details of the Professional working with the patient.

- Background information on medication and possible side effects.
- Information about Care Programme Approach
- Contact details for local and national support organisations.

## The Carers' Charter

In line with the Carers' Charter the following approaches are being implemented:

- Leaflets on confidentiality and information sharing will be given to patients and carers and discussed at the earliest stage, usually during assessment and then at reviews.
- Staff will help patients to distinguish between sensitive and personal issues (for example, about their sexuality), which are to remain confidential, and more general information about the illness, which can be shared.
- Issues regarding confidentiality will be recorded in the patient's notes so that all staff are aware of any changes in the patient's attitude regarding confidentiality.
- The professional working with the patient will provide carers with the support and help needed on issues relating to information sharing and confidentiality.
- Carers must be encouraged to ask questions. Time must be made available to answer questions.
- Professionals will involve carers in treatment plans and in major decision about the patient

# Good Practice Checklist

The following checklist has been taken from the 'Carers and Confidentiality in Mental Health' leaflet produced by the Partners in Care campaign and published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. It is designed to assist staff to work closer with carers within the boundaries of current legislation and to help carers understand their rights.

## **Carers are given general factual information, both verbal and written about:**

- The mental health diagnosis
- What behaviour is likely to occur and how to manage it
- Medication – benefits and possible side-effects
- Local in-patient and community services
- The Care Programme Approach (CPA)
- Local and national support groups

## **Carers are helped to understand:**

- The present situation
- Any confidentiality restrictions requested by the patient
- The patient's treatment plan and its aims
- Any written care plan, crisis plan or recovery programme
- The role of each professional involved in the patient's care
- How to access help, including out-of-hours services

## Carers are given

- The opportunity to see a professional on their own
- The right to their own confidentiality when talking to a professional
- Encouragement to feel a valued member of the care team
- Confidence to voice their views and any concerns they may have
- Emotional and practical support
- An assessment of their own needs with their own written care plan (i.e. if the patient has a serious mental illness or learning disability).



# What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment, or complaint about the service?

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment, or complaint you can:

- talk to the people directly involved in your care
- ask a member of staff for a feedback form, or complete a form on the Trust website [www.ntw.nhs.uk](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk) (click on the 'Contact us' tab)
- telephone the Complaints Department Tel: 0191 245 6672
- We are always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows us to monitor the quality of our services and act upon issues that you bring to our attention.

## References

Carers and confidentiality in mental health, May 2010 Royal College of Psychiatrists

[Good Psychiatric Practice- Confidentiality and Information Sharing \(2nd edition\) \(CR209 Nov 2017\) \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](#)

## Further Information

It's the responsibility of all care staff to work in partnership with carers so you can talk to any member of the team about your relative, friend or family member.



# Accessibility

Patient information leaflets are available on our website:  
[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets)

# 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

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)

Support Oxford Health Charity, making a difference to patients, their families and staff who care for them: [www.oxfordhealth.charity](http://www.oxfordhealth.charity)