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**TEES, ESK AND WEAR VALLEYS NHS
FOUNDATION TRUST
CARER SUPPORT STRATEGY 2014 - 2017**

Current Status: **Final**

Compliance

INTRODUCTION BY TRUST'S CHAIR

I introduced the Carers Strategy for Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation in 2011 written with the help of carers and Governors and fully supported by the Board of Directors. In 2014 we have updated this strategy and have a new implementation plan to outline our aims to improve carer support and to re-affirm our commitment to embedding the Triangle of care (TOC). The implementation plan will be monitored by the Council of Governors Experience of Carers Committee.

Our Trust is committed to improving the experience of carers and I am pleased to see that nationally carers are increasingly acknowledged for their expertise and knowledge and are seen as essential partners in the provision of health services. The majority of support provided to people with mental health problems is in fact provided by friends, family and carers and it is sad when we hear there are occasions when the needs of these carers are forgotten. We want to see all our carers meaningfully involved in care and support planning for the people who use our services.

It is a fact that many carers do not actually see themselves as carers; they are a husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, son or friend and for them the caring relationship is simply part of normal everyday life. We recognise that providing care is not easy and carers can experience physical, mental or emotional strain as a direct result of being a carer and it is important that our services assess their need for information, support or advice. They deserve the right kind of help and support to look after their own health and wellbeing by signposting to appropriate agencies whenever it is needed. In turn this will help them to care more safely and effectively for their relatives and friends.

I am aware that one of the barriers our staff and carers experience is the issue of confidentiality. Carers understand the importance of patient confidentiality but do not want to be excluded from patient care because of the fear of breaching confidentiality. On the few occasions when patients do not wish a carer to be informed about their care, barriers can be overcome by reassuring carers, giving them non-confidential information about mental health conditions, contact details of the health and social care professionals involved and support organisations together with background information on medication and possible side effects and care plans.

The Trust will now take this updated strategy forward and its success will be judged by our actions and the outcomes for carers.

Jo Turnbull, Chairman
March 2014

VISION

The Trust's vision is:-

To be a recognised centre of excellence with high quality staff providing high quality services that exceed people's expectations.

This Carer Support Strategy contributes to the delivery of the Trust vision by providing a specific focus on the needs of carers.

The values of the Trust form the guiding principles and behaviours of the way we will do things in relation to carers

DEFINITION OF A CARER

It is widely recognised that many carers do not see themselves as a carer, for them the caring relationship is simply part of normal everyday family life.

In the consultation, carers told us they wanted us to see carers of all ages involved and informed and to recognise that the service user's condition can have an impact on the carer's own health and well being, including young carers attending school.

Carers provide a significant proportion of the care needed by service users and evidence shows that outcomes are improved when they are appropriately informed, consulted and involved in decisions about the treatment and care of the person they care for.

AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy applies the Trust's values and behaviours with our contact with carers and provides a framework for staff as part of the Quality and Assurance Strategy to improve, monitor and evaluate carer experience alongside patient experience measures.

It recognises carer expertise and outline the priorities that the carers of users of trust services have identified are important to them. This has been through feedback from consultations and from previous surveys, issues raised through Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) and complaints and standards set by a sub- committee of the Council of Governors Improving the Experience of Carers Group. This group includes appointed and elected representatives.

This strategy will embrace a culture of openness, honesty and candour, one of the overriding lessons learnt from the public inquiry led by Robert Francis in to the events of Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust with the final report published in 2013. It includes the learning from an independent review into the deaths of 4 service users in 2013 relating to carer/family involvement.

Our aim is to:-

- Ensure carers receive timely and appropriate information to support them and the person they care for
- Treat carers as individuals and with dignity and respect for their cultural, communication and physical and mental health needs
- Actively involve carers in decisions about the care and treatment of the person they care for wherever possible
- Develop and implement carer awareness training for staff to ensure carers needs are recognised
- Actively involve carers by consulting and seeking views when planning, developing, delivering and improving services

An implementation plan has been developed to achieve the aims of this strategy.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

- In November 2010, the Department of Health published a carers strategy entitled, *Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the carers strategy*. The strategy outlines a vision that ‘carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals’ needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside caring, while enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.’
- The Triangle of Care (TOC) guidance launched in 2010 by the Carers Trust is a guide to best practice in mental health care in England, carers included. A second edition was published in 2013 to reflect the project development into all areas of the mental health care pathway. The aim of the guidance was to “provide a therapeutic alliance between service user, staff member and carer that promotes safety, support, recovery and sustains wellbeing.” It includes standards and resources to support Trusts to ensure carers are fully included and supported when the person they care for has an acute mental health episode.
- The Triangle of Care guidance has 6 key elements to achieving a better collaboration and partnership with carers in the service user and carer’s journey through mental health services as follows:-
 1. Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact or as soon as possible thereafter.
 2. Staff are ‘carer aware’ and trained in carer engagement strategies

3. Policy and practice protocols re: confidentiality and sharing information, are in place
4. Defined post(s) responsible for carers are in place
5. A carer introduction to the service and staff is available, with a relevant range of information across the care pathway
6. A range of carer support services is available

LOCAL CONTEXT

In July 2010 the Council of Governors Improving the Experience of Carers Group together with staff from the Patient Experience Team commenced a consultation process to identify what carers felt were the key priorities for a carers' strategy.

Carers of people using services provided by the Trust informed us:-

- they know the service user best and they asked to be listened to and to have their expertise recognised.
- although they are aware of the importance of patient confidentiality, above all they do not want staff to exclude them because of fear of breaching this. They ask for staff to be aware they can give reassurance by discussing general information relating to specific mental health conditions and the assessment process during an inpatient stay.
- they want to be informed and involved in care planning in relation to treatment and support being offered.
- they would like to see the principles of the document "Triangle of Care" to be used as a basis for including carers and for the strategy to be embedded throughout the organisation with carers included in awareness training for staff.

WHY THE TRUST IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING CARERS AND TAKING FORWARD THE TRIANGLE OF CARE:-

- To learn from the valuable expertise and experience of carers to develop services which meet people's needs
- To work with greater candour, openness and accountability.
- To work together constructively to openly enable us to build ongoing positive and reciprocal relationships to the benefit of each person who receives a service provided by the Trust.
- Carers have told us they value being listened to and knowing they can make a difference to their own lives and the lives of those they care for. It can be an empowering experience and can help build confidence and self-esteem for themselves and assist with a sustained recovery for the person they care for.

- In the community, despite the fact that 1 in 4 people are likely to experience a mental health problem during their lifetime, service users and carers are often subject to stigma, discrimination and social exclusion. It is therefore vital that we work alongside service users and their carers to find new ways to counteract stigma and discrimination in the community.
- Working alongside carers creates opportunities for staff to develop new skills and expertise as they learn about people's experiences of living with mental health conditions or a learning disability.

WE AIM TO DO THIS BY INCORPORATING THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE TRIANGLE OF CARE INTO THE PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED AIMS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Ensuring carers receive appropriate information at the right time to support both themselves and the people they care for and we will provide:-

- Access to an assessment of their needs as a carer, with recognition they may need emotional support and time for themselves, including respite care by signposting to other appropriate support and care organisations, e.g. local authorities, Mind, Alzheimer's Society
- Advice on how to help the person they support
- Ward/service information, including how to access PALS on the freephone, 0800 052 0219
- Accessible facts on mental health conditions and treatment options.
- Where appropriate, information about care planning and a copy of the care plan of the person they provide care for
- Advice on how to raise concerns and give feedback
- Help on what to do and who to contact urgently by providing crisis plans where appropriate to carers
- Advice and information on healthy lifestyle options to help the person they provide care for to stop smoking, improve nutrition and diet, and take more physical exercise
- Signposting to independent carer support services for advice
- Guidelines on confidentiality and sharing information

2. Treating carers as individuals and with dignity and respect for their cultural, communication and physical needs and we will ensure:-

- Work continues in partnership with local authority organisations in implementing their carer strategies to ensure carers are supported in looking

after themselves and the person they care for (These organisations have information relating to legislation supporting carers' rights)

- Care co-ordination includes supporting service users and carers to access agencies providing housing, leisure, education, debt management, welfare rights and employment, etc.
- Advocacy support is available when required, eg mental health advocacy, and interpreters
- Information is available in different formats to meet the diverse range of service users' and carers' needs
- Carers are offered a carers assessment or signposted to the appropriate agency

3. Where appropriate to actively involve carers in decisions about the care and treatment of the person they care for and we will ensure:-

- Carers are recognised as active partners in the Trust's care programme approach (CPA)
- Carers of all ages are involved in care planning and treatment options for every service user
- We listen and respond to carers when service users are experiencing a crisis and throughout the treatment process
- We offer emotional support to carers, which may include signposting to appropriate agencies when they need someone to listen to their concerns or worries

4. Train our staff in how and when to work with carers and we will ensure that:-

- The role of partner voluntary organisations in the community supporting carers are communicated to staff
- A clear framework relating to confidentiality and support is available to staff in dealing with complex situations
- Staff are aware of carers rights' to have an assessment of their caring needs and the referral process for carrying out such an assessment
- Staff are aware of carers support organisations and the Trust's website as a source of information for these organisations and information on mental health conditions and medications
- There are carer champions/carers leads in all areas of the Trust and that carers and the person they provide care for are made aware of these members of staff
- If carers themselves require training, the Trust can signpost appropriately.

5. Involve carers by consulting and seeking views when planning, developing, delivering and improving services and we will ensure that:-

- Trust mechanisms are improved for the inclusion/engagement of carers in all aspects of Trust services e.g. recruitment and selection of new staff, staff training, quality improvement work, ie service model lines and care pathway development, kaizen and Rapid Improvement Workshops.
- Carers are fully informed and their views sought when changes to Trust services are being considered which may effect either themselves or the person they care for
- The views of carers are sought through monitoring processes, providing regular feedback to the Trust Board and clinical directorates

CONCLUSION

The TEWV Carer Support Strategy outlines the continued commitment to supporting carers with identified actions that are required to improve the levels of communication between staff and carers.

Our success in achieving these goals will be measured in a number of ways and the Council of Governors Experience of Carers Committee will receive regular updates on progress being made on the actions outlined. Training will take place to raise awareness of the Triangle of Care throughout the Trust and carer link workers identified on each of the wards. Levels of satisfaction expressed by carers will be monitored through surveys using the hand held electronic devices and paper surveys. The numbers of carers who have had their needs assessed with a carer support plan will be monitored. The numbers of carers complaining about lack of involvement in care will also be monitored.

References

The Triangle of Care Carers Included A Guide to best practice in Acute Mental Health Care second edition. 2013

Originally National Mental Health Development Unit and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers Launched July 2010)

Carers UK

<http://www.carersuk.org/Home>

