Working together to make a real difference

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
☐	**What is the diagnosis or problem?**
☐	**If a diagnosis has not yet been made, what are the possibilities?**
☐	**Why has this happened to them?**
☐	**Will they recover?**
	If a diagnosis has been made
☐	**What symptoms suggest this diagnosis/illness?**
☐	**What is known about the causes of this disorder/illness?**
☐	**What is likely to happen in the future? Will it get better or worse?**
☐	**Where can I get written information about this disorder?**
	About the assessment
☐	**What assessments have already been done?**

☐	**Are there any other assessments that might be needed?**
☐	**Are there any physical problems that have been discovered? If so, what will need to be done?**
☐	**Have culture and background been considered?**

Care Programme Approach (CPA)

☐	**What is the CPA?**
☐	**What does the CPA mean?**
☐	**Is the person on the CPA? If not, why not?**
☐	**Will I be involved in the CPA?**

About care and treatment

☐	**What are the aims of the care and treatment?**
☐	**What is a care co-ordinator?**
☐	**What part will the care coordinator play in the person's care?**
☐	**Who else will be involved in the treatment?**
☐	**What is your plan for treatment?**
☐	**For how long will they need treatment?**
☐	**Would talking treatments (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy, family therapy) be helpful? If so, are they available locally?**
☐	**What happens if they refuse treatment?**

Sharing of information

☐	**Have you asked them about how much information they are happy to share with me?**
☐	**Will I be informed about important meetings concerning their care and treatment?**
☐	**Can I see you on my own?**
☐	**Would you like to ask me for any other information about them or the family?**
☐	**Can I tell you things that will not be shared with the person or other members of staff?**
☐	**Are their views on confidentiality clearly marked in their notes?**

Care and treatment

☐	**What can I do to help?**
☐	**Are there any local self-help or carers' groups that can help me understand the illness?**
☐	**How can I get advice and training in the day-to-day management of the illness?**

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

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