Family intervention in psychosis

Even close relationships can be put under strain by mental health problems. We know that family members, partners and friends (carers) can feel unsure about the best way to support a service user. Similarly, service users can find it difficult to explain how they are feeling to those close to them.

Therefore, a particular way of working with service users with psychosis and carers has been developed, which is often described as "family intervention". It aims to support both the service user with psychosis and anyone who lives with them or sees a lot of them. It is a "talking treatment" and is often used at the same time as other treatments - like medication.

What do family intervention sessions involve?

This depends on what the service user and their carer need. They are designed so that everybody has equal time to talk about how they feel - and what they want. The job of the therapist is to work with everybody to find better ways of managing a situation. It can involve sharing information that people want about:

- what is psychosis?
- why has it happened?
- how can we understand this?
It can also involve talking about:
- anything that has been making life difficult
- working together to find ways of making life easier, both for the carer and for the service user with psychosis
- helpful strategies and practical ways of helping the service user with psychosis to get better.

**What do family intervention sessions not involve?**
- Bringing up the past
- Blaming or criticising anyone.

**Who comes to the sessions and how long do they last?**
- The service user with psychosis and any carer, other relatives or friends who are important - two therapists are usually involved
- The meetings often take place at home - if this is not convenient, you can meet at the community mental health team base
- They usually last about one hour
- They usually happen about twice a month for three to twelve months.
Is there any evidence that family intervention is helpful?

- A lot of research over the last 30 years has shown that family intervention can help in many ways, particularly preventing service users from having a relapse.
- The updated National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence Guideline for Schizophrenia (NICE, 2009) suggest that family intervention in psychosis should be offered to service users and carers.

How do I get to see a family intervention therapist?

- We want to make it easier for service users - and their carers - to get family interventions.
- If you are using one of our services, ask your Community Mental Health Team worker or psychiatrist to refer you - they will carry on seeing you while you come to family intervention sessions.
- If you are a carer (eg family member, partner, friend), please contact the team worker or psychiatrist involved in the service user's care.
Are there any risks or side effects of family intervention?

We hope that working with a therapist will lead to good results and you will feel better. However, talking therapies do not suit everybody and some types might work better for you than others. Therapy can be upsetting or feel like hard work at first because you are trying to find new ways to deal with your difficulties. It is important to tell your therapist if you think therapy is not helping you or if there are any problems in your relationship with them. They will work with you to try to sort these out.

Leaflets about what to expect from psychological therapies are produced by the Mental Health Foundation (Talking Therapies Explained - www.mentalhealth.org.uk) and MIND (Understanding psychological therapies - www.mind.org.uk).

If you would like to discuss any areas of this leaflet, or have any other queries about family intervention in psychosis, please feel free to contact ......................................................

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who would be happy to respond to any of your questions or concerns.
If you’d like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please ask us.

Contact SLaM
SLaM switchboard: 020 3228 6000
SLaM website: www.slam.nhs.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
PALS is here to listen and support you in whatever way they can to ensure your experience at SLaM is a positive one. If you are not happy about something at SLaM then PALS will try to help you. If you decide you want to make a formal complaint PALS can advise you how to do this.

PALS 24hr information line: 0800 731 2864
PALS website: www.slam.nhs.uk/pals
PALS email: pals@slam.nhs.uk

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For the quickest way to plan your journey to a SLaM service try TfL’s journey planner.

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