



South London  
and Maudsley  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Families and Carers Handbook

[www.slam.nhs.uk/carers](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/carers)

This handbook is for you if you are supporting a relative or friend with a mental illness or addiction.

It will help you contribute to their care and look after your own health.

## About us

We are South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. We provide:

- mental health services for adults and children in Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark,
- substance misuse services for people who are addicted to drugs or alcohol, and
- specialist services for people from across the UK. These include mother and baby services, and services for people with eating disorders, psychosis and autism.

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## Are you a carer?

Many people don't see themselves as carers.

You might see the emotional and practical support that you provide as part of being someone's partner, parent, child, friend or neighbour.

No matter how you see yourself, you are a carer if you provide or arrange care for someone who struggles to cope without your support.

If you are a carer, you could be entitled to help and support that makes your life easier.

## Our promise to you

Whatever help you need, we will always do our best to support you. We promise to:

- listen to you, respect your views and treat you with dignity at all times
- recognise you as an important source of information about the person you care for
- respond to your questions and concerns
- support you and keep you informed.

If you ever feel we are not doing any of these things well enough, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

call: 0800 731 2864 (Option 2)

email: [pals@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@slam.nhs.uk)

[www.slam.nhs.uk/pals](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/pals)

## If only I'd known...

This advice is from carers who have attended our course 'If only I'd known' for carers of older people and people with dementia.

- Take time out. "This is a MUST! Not a choice!" You have to get out and give yourself some space and time out. Do not drop regular activities. If you have hobbies try and keep them up.
- Stay healthy. Get check-ups from your GP, dentist and optician. Tell your GP that you are a carer.
- Develop coping strategies. Do something different and take yourself away from the situation if it is becoming too overwhelming. Divert yourself if possible.
- Always try and keep your temper. Losing it makes you feel bad and it can have a negative effect on the person you care for. Take yourself away and cool down. Phone a friend!
- You have to face the fact you are not invincible or irreplaceable. It only seems that way!
- Get support from other carers. Join a carers' group if possible as you will be connected and engaged and they will help you look after yourself.

# The care coordinator

This is usually the first point of contact for you and the person you care for.

As a carer you should get the name and contact details of the care coordinator and the team that is providing a service to your relative or friend.

The care coordinator will be a health or social care professional such as a community psychiatric nurse, occupational therapist or social worker.

They will generally support you in three ways:

- make sure you get the support you need (pages 7-9). This usually includes offering you a **carer's engagement and support plan** and helping you get a **carer's assessment**
- give you as much **information** (page 10) as they can about the person you care for and how you can support them
- involve you in the **care plan** (page 11) for the person you look after as much as possible.

## Get in touch

If you have not heard from us, please contact the team looking after the person you care for, or contact PALS for help – see page 5.

# Support for you as a carer

We can provide and arrange support to help make caring easier.

We work with you to make a **carer's engagement and support plan**. This means all the carers in patient's lives are identified, and their needs are recorded on our information systems. It can also trigger a **carer's assessment**.

If you are caring for someone who is using our services you are legally entitled to a carer's assessment, under the Care Act 2014.

The kind of support we provide could include:

- training - we run courses for carers
- information and advice - and putting you in touch with helpful people and services
- breaks - arranging for someone to step in when you need a short break
- arranging talking therapies for you.

**If you have not had a carer's engagement and support plan or a carer's needs assessment, tell the care coordinator**, or the team that is looking after the person you care for.

You can also call Carers UK 0808 808 7777 or visit [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)



## If things change

You might find that things change for yourself or the person you care for.

You might have concerns about your health, work, money, or other family members.

Or maybe the health or mobility of the person you care for has deteriorated, or there are issues with their housing.

Tell your care coordinator if things have changed.

They can look at your situation again and see what further help or support may be available.

## Care plans

A care plan is a written agreement which describes the support we provide to someone who uses our services, including what to do in a crisis.

A care plan should make sense, be helpful and reflect what the person receiving services thinks and feels.

We involve families and carers as much as possible in the development of a care plan.

We need to know what experience you have of the individual's mental health problems and what has helped in the past.

As a carer or family member you should be given a copy of the plan and should be invited to regular meetings to discuss the plan, unless the person you care for has not given his or her consent.

If you are concerned that the care plan is not being followed, you have not been invited to any meetings or you are not being involved as much as you would like, you should tell your care coordinator or care team.

Both you and the person you care for can ask for the care plan to be reviewed at any time.

## Sharing information

We will give you as much information as we can about the person you care for. We also welcome any information that you can share with us.

The way we share information between service users, carers and staff is based on:

- service user wishes
- privacy and confidentiality of both carers and service users
- best interest of service users.

If you and the person you care for have different views on what you need to know we will work through this with you. We have a duty of care to both yourself and the person you care for

To find out more, ask for the booklet “Confidentiality and sharing information with carers” or find it at [www.slam.nhs.uk/carers](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/carers)

## Questions to ask

- How much can you tell me about their problem, care and treatment?
- Will I be involved in discussions about their care and treatment?
- Which aspects of their care and treatment will I be involved in?

# Types of treatment

This include talking therapies, occupational therapy and medication, as well as improving physical health.

Ask us if you have any questions about the aims of the treatment and who or what will be involved.

## Talking therapies

These involve talking in groups, one to one or with families and partners, and sometimes include trying things out between meetings.

Talking therapies can help people cope with anxiety, stress, depression, obsessions, traumatic life experiences, long term emotional problems and psychosis.

## Occupational therapy

Occupational therapists provide practical support so people can do activities (or occupations) that matter to them and manage their daily life.

Activities take place on wards and at home, both individually and in groups. They might include cooking, art, creative writing, music or gardening.

Occupational therapists can also support people who want to work, volunteer or find suitable leisure activities.

## Medication

Medication can help people with mental health difficulties to cope better and to benefit from other treatment.

Ask us if you have any general questions or concerns about benefits and risks, side-effects or anything else.

You can also:

- speak to a pharmacist or your GP
- check the patient information leaflet that comes with the medication
- visit [www.slam.nhs.uk/meds](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/meds)
- visit the NHS website [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or call 111.

### **In an emergency**

If you think the person you care for is having a severe reaction to their medication:

- call the team who is caring for them and ask to speak to the duty doctor, or
- call the NHS helpline on 111, or
- go direct to A&E at your local hospital.

## Getting help in a crisis

The care plan will include what to do if the person you care for suddenly becomes unwell. Within mental health, this is often called a crisis.

The care coordinator will talk to you about what to include in the plan. It should include:

- what might increase the risk of a crisis (triggers)
- possible warning signs of a crisis
- details of who will do what
- contact information for support (see below)

### During office hours

Call the care coordinator or the team duty number. Add the numbers to your phone.

### At other times

Call **0800 731 2864** (Option 1) to speak to the South London and Maudsley 24 hour mental health crisis line.

If you need urgent help you can also **call 111** to speak to the free NHS helpline for anyone with an urgent healthcare need.

If you are with someone who has attempted suicide, call 999 and stay with them until the ambulance arrives.

**More information:** [www.slam.nhs.uk/crisis](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/crisis)

## Going into hospital

Most people are looked after in the community or at home. Some people need a stay in hospital.

People stay in hospital as a voluntary patient or under a section of the Mental Health Act. As a voluntary (or informal) patient they can leave hospital at any time and are not obliged to take medication or accept treatment.

If a person is in hospital under a section of the act, they need medical permission to leave the ward (called section 17 leave) and may be expected to take medication and treatment.

## Nearest relative

You have specific rights if you are the “nearest relative” of someone being treated under the Mental Health Act. This is a legal term - it is not the same as next of kin or carer.

For example, you can ask that the person you care for is seen by an independent mental health advocate, someone who provides free and confidential support to anyone being treated under the Mental Health Act.

You can also request a Mental Health Act assessment, which may lead to their admission to hospital, or ask that they be discharged - which may lead to them leaving hospital.

## Leaving hospital

Before leaving hospital, family and carers should be involved with the care team in drawing up a discharge plan. This plan should include a relapse prevention plan which makes sure everyone knows what to do if the person's mental health deteriorates again.

## Community treatment orders

Some sectioned patients leave hospital under community treatment orders. These mean someone can be treated in the community so long as they follow certain conditions.

If we can't find a way to make the community treatment order work, or the person your care for becomes very unwell, they might be recalled to hospital.

## Find out more

To find out more about the practicalities of going into hospital, and the Mental Health Act, speak to a member of staff or visit our website.

You can find our Mental Health Act information at [www.slam.nhs.uk/mha](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/mha)



# Concerns, complaints and compliments

Please tell us if you have any concerns, complaints or compliments. We need to know when we are getting it right and when we need to improve. Here's some ways to contact us:

- **Speak to your care coordinator**, or someone in the team that is looking after the person you care for. This is usually the quickest and easiest way to resolve any issues.
- **Contact PALS** (our Patient Advice and Liaison Service) for an informal discussion. They provide advice and information and can help to improve the quality of care.  
phone: **0800 731 2864** (Freephone)  
email: [pals@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@slam.nhs.uk)  
website: [www.slam.nhs.uk/pals](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/pals)
- **Contact our complaints team**, if you want to make a formal complaint.  
phone: 020 3228 2444  
email: [complaints@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@slam.nhs.uk)  
website: [www.slam.nhs.uk/complaints](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/complaints)

# Get involved

Help us improve and deliver our services.

You can do this in a number of ways:

- fill out a survey - ask for a friends and family test if you are not given one
- share your concerns, complaints and compliments
- volunteer – opportunities include helping with gardening, reception, peer support and befriending projects
- join the involvement register – this might mean you help to deliver training, sit on interview panels or offer your views at committees and groups
- become a member of our organisation – South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. Members support us on a voluntary basis and provide us with feedback, local knowledge and support.
- stand for election as a carer representative on our Council of Governors.

Visit [www.slam.nhs.uk/getinvolved](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/getinvolved) to find out more or contact PALS (see back page).

## More support and contacts

The care coordinator will be able to tell you if there is a carers' support group available for you.

Other guides for carers are available from NHS England, Mind and Rethink Mental Illness.

More local and national contacts are listed below.

### **Recovery College**

Training and support for people with mental health difficulties and their carers, family and friends.

call: 020 3228 3643

email: [hello@slamrecoverycollege.co.uk](mailto:hello@slamrecoverycollege.co.uk)

website: [www.slamrecoverycollege.co.uk](http://www.slamrecoverycollege.co.uk)

## Croydon

### **Croydon Council**

call: 020 8726 6000

[www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk)

### **Carers Support Centre**

call: 020 8649 9339

email: [info@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:info@carersinfo.org.uk)

[www.carersinfo.org.uk](http://www.carersinfo.org.uk)

Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm

### **Mind in Croydon**

call: 020 8668 2210

email: [admin@mindincroydon.org.uk](mailto:admin@mindincroydon.org.uk)

[www.mindincroydon.org.uk](http://www.mindincroydon.org.uk)

## Lambeth

### **Lambeth Council**

call: 020 7926 1000

email: [infoservice@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:infoservice@lambeth.gov.uk)

[www.lambeth.gov.uk](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk)

### **Carers Hub Lambeth**

call: 020 7501 897020

email: [connect@carershub.org.uk](mailto:connect@carershub.org.uk)

[www.carershub.org.uk](http://www.carershub.org.uk)

### **Lambeth and Southwark Mind**

call: 020 7501 9203

[www.lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk](http://www.lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk)

## Lewisham

### **Lewisham Council**

call: 020 8314 6000

[www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk)

### **Carers Lewisham**

call: 020 8699 8686

email: [info@carerslewisham.org.uk](mailto:info@carerslewisham.org.uk)

[www.carerslewisham.org.uk](http://www.carerslewisham.org.uk)

### **Lewisham Community Wellbeing**

call: 020 3228 0760

### **Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind**

call: 020 3228 0760

[www.blgmind.org.uk/lewisham](http://www.blgmind.org.uk/lewisham)

## Southwark

### **Southwark Council**

call: 020 7525 5000

[www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)

### **Southwark MIND**

call: 020 7358 7030

email: [info@lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk](mailto:info@lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk)

[www.lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk](http://www.lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk)

### **Southwark Carers**

call: 020 7708 4497

email: [info@southwarkcarers.org.uk](mailto:info@southwarkcarers.org.uk)

[www.southwarkcarers.org.uk](http://www.southwarkcarers.org.uk)

### **Southwark Wellbeing Hub**

“Taking the stress out of finding support”

call: 020 3751 9684

text: ‘HUB1’ and your query to 82727

email: [southwarkhub@together-uk.org](mailto:southwarkhub@together-uk.org)

[www.together-uk.org/southwark-wellbeing-hub](http://www.together-uk.org/southwark-wellbeing-hub)

## National contacts

Information, advice and support for carers.

### **Adfam** (drugs and alcohol)

Call: 020 3817 9410

[www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

### **National Association for Children of Alcoholics** (for people of any age who are affected by their parents' drinking)

Call: 0800 358 3456

[www.nacoa.org.uk](http://www.nacoa.org.uk)

### **Alzheimer's Society**

National dementia helpline: 0300 222 11 22

[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

### **Carers Trust**

call: 0300 772 9600

[www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

### **Carers UK**

call: 0808 808 7777

[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

### **Child Line**

call: 0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **The Mix**

For people aged under 25, including young carers.

call: 0808 808 4994

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

**NHS**

24 hour support and advice

call: 111

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Mind**

Mental health charity

call: 0300 123 3393

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**Rethink Mental Illness**

call: 0300 5000 927

[www.rethink.org.uk](http://www.rethink.org.uk)

**Royal College of Psychiatrists**

Professional body for psychiatrists

[www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)

**Samaritans**

24 hour helpline

call: 116 123

email: [jo@samaritans.org.uk](mailto:jo@samaritans.org.uk)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**SANE**

Mental health charity

Call: 0300 304 7000

[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

Please ask if you need this information in large print or another format or language

## Main trust contacts:

Switchboard: 020 3228 6000  
[www.slam.nhs.uk](http://www.slam.nhs.uk)

Patient Advice and Liaison Service:  
0800 731 2864 (choose option 2)  
email: [pals@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@slam.nhs.uk)  
[www.slam.nhs.uk/pals](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/pals)

24 hour mental health crisis line  
0800 731 2864 (choose option 1)  
[www.slam.nhs.uk/crisis](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/crisis)

[www.slam.nhs.uk/carers](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/carers)