

## Treatment Tools

### Supporting Carers: Guide for health professionals

Supporting a person with personality disorder can be challenging at times, particularly when the individual is experiencing crisis. It is important for mental health professionals to also support carers in their caring role. Note, in this guide the term 'carer' may be used to denote someone who provides care, support and assistance for an individual with personality disorder. Carers may be a partner, parent or child, other family member (including chosen family), or friend.

#### Understand and respect the rights of carers

Carers have rights, including the right to:

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Be recognised by health professionals as a contributor to the health of the person being cared for.
- Be heard and treated with respect.
- Complain about provided services and appeal against unfavourable decisions.

It is important for health professionals to be familiar with the Carer Recognition Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2010/20/whole>).

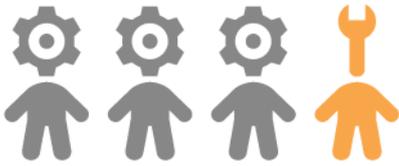


#### What do carers need from health professionals?

- To be informed about and included in the treatment that the individual they are caring for is receiving, and provided with information at all stages of the treatment process.
- To be provided with accurate and written education about personality disorder and how they can help the person they support, including electronic resources.
- To be supported in finding appropriate services for the person they support, and to be provided with accurate information about the services so that they can make an informed decision with the person they are supporting (eg. provide a list of private psychologists that have experience treating personality disorder).
- To be provided with information on helpful and unhelpful strategies in their interactions with the person they support.
- To be encouraged and supported to receive their own support, including counselling, support groups and helplines.

#### Interacting with carers

- It may be the first time that a carer is hearing information about personality disorders. Be patient and open to questions. Carers also depend on mental health professionals to provide them with information.
- Discuss with the individual with personality disorder who they want involved in their treatment, and discuss the benefits of



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communication between mental health professionals and carers. Carer involvement can help protect the safety of the individual with personality disorder, the carer/s, family members and other support people.

- If given permission, include carers in treatment consultations. Carers can provide their perspective of the person they support to aid treatment.
- Make regular contact with carers to ensure that they are supported.
- Encourage self-care and mental health support for carers, and make referrals where necessary.
- Use clinical judgement to recognise unhelpful carer behaviours, and address these sensitively.

### **The Lived Experience Project:**

The information in these resources was provided by people with lived experience of personality disorder and carers supporting people with personality disorder through two focus groups carried out in May 2019. This set of resources were developed through co-design and consultation with people with lived experience and other peak Consumer and Carer bodies in NSW. This work was funded by the New South Wales Mental Health Commission.

### **What do health professionals need to understand about being a carer?**

- Being a carer is often a 24/7 role. It can be very stressful, and many are doing the best they can.
- Supporting someone with personality disorder can have an impact on family members, including emotional and financial challenges.
- Carers often experience guilt. Adopt a non-judgemental and de-stigmatising approach to supporting carers.

### **For downloadable carer resources, go to:**

- <https://www.projectairstrategy.org/mpafactsheets/index.html>
- <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/carers/Pages/resources.aspx>
- <http://www.mentalhealthcarersnsw.org/information-hub-2/arafmi-brochures/>