

Introduction

You are a carer if, in your own time, you help another person who is disadvantaged due to a mental health problem. You may be expected to do this occasionally or almost full time. The person may be your spouse, a parent, a sibling, your child, another relative or a friend. You may be one of several people who do things to help a person to cope with their mental health problems, or you may be the only person that they trust.

Your experience of the person you care for, and your own observations of their state of mind, mood and behaviour, can be very important to our staff who are working to help them.

Living with or caring for someone who experiences mental distress can be tiring, worrying, stressful, upsetting and emotionally draining. It can also be rewarding if the person you are caring for makes a breakthrough, however in order to support them through the tough times and keep them on track for those breakthroughs, you will need support and guidance yourself. We recognise just how important and valuable the role of the carer is.

As a carer you are entitled to an assessment of your own needs - the care co-ordinator for the person you care for can tell you more information about this, and there is more information in this carer's pack.

acknowledgements

With grateful thanks to Lu Duhig from Avon and Wiltshire for sharing the information given here that she has developed for carers - written by carers.

"I have compiled this pack for carers because I have experienced much of the bewilderment, anxiety, frustration and anger that you may be suffering at the moment. When mental illness first touched my family we felt alone and frightened. Remember that you are not alone; there are people who can help you too, at this difficult time. Other carers can be a great support, they understand what you are going through.

In compiling this pack I would like to acknowledge grateful thanks:

- To all contributors to the Salisbury carers' information pack.
- For ideas and information from the draft Rethink carers' pack.
- For ideas and support from the family work service based in Bath.
- To the carers, service users, support workers and professionals who gave their time to read and make comment on the draft contents."

Lu Duhig, a carer

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