

# Module 9: Understanding Mental Health Services

## REACT online Toolkit info sheet

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### Carer's Assessment

Relatives providing support to someone with physical or mental health difficulties ('carers') also have a right to their own Carer's Assessment of needs and a plan of support.

This should follow the same 4 key steps described in development of the Care Plan, assess the same areas of wellbeing, and focus on achieving the same range of outcomes.

The Carer's Assessment can be done by the same mental health service as your relative/friend receives support from, or by a collaborating organisation. If you want a Carer's Assessment then ask the Care Coordinator to arrange this.

Even if your relative does not want support from mental health services, you are still entitled to an assessment of the impact of caring on you and your needs. Services have a legal duty to offer a Carer's Assessment at least once a year and it is the responsibility of the Care Coordinator to make sure this happens.

A Carer's Assessment can be extremely helpful in all kinds of ways so it's worth asking for. Remember, it is your needs that are being assessed. It's important you share any difficulties you are having and ask for support; no one is making judgements on how good you are as a carer.

**You should be provided with a copy of your assessment. Check you are happy with it.**

### Making the Most of Clinical Meetings

Clinical services should involve relatives/close friends as key members of the care team. This includes inviting them to clinical meetings. You know the person best, are best placed to notice signs of relapse or change, and are likely to be supporting their staying well strategies. You may find that you have lots of questions that you want answers to but somehow you never seem to get the chance to ask them.

Visit the REACT NHS website, ([www.reactnhs.uk](http://www.reactnhs.uk)), to find some strategies to help.



Your Early Intervention team can make sure you get access to the REACT online toolkit



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

Department of Health Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed therein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HTA, NIHR, NHS or the Department of Health.

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## Confidentiality

Talking with the health professionals about the person you care for can be difficult as staff may refuse to tell you some things because of 'confidentiality'. This can make caring for your relative difficult and can lead you to feel left out of their care.

Before staff can share some information with you, they need to have gained consent from your relative – i.e. their permission to share this information. This is important because your relative needs to feel safe in talking openly with mental health staff about their experiences.

There may be some information that your relative does not want you to know. This might be about their private experiences or beliefs.

The important thing is to find out what information staff **can** share with you, and what you **can** share with them. This is important because it ensures there is good communication between the people providing support. Information sharing is not 'all or nothing'. There is always some information that can be shared with you.

### There are three main types of information:

**General Information** – this is what is available to the general public about mental health problems, treatment options and services that are available.

Staff can always share general information with you

**Personal Information** – specific information, such as your relative's mental health diagnosis, medication and their care plan.

Staff can share personal information on a need to know basis with careful consideration of the risks and benefits of this disclosure. For example, if you are named in the Care Plan as a provided of support, you need to know what this is.

**Personal Sensitive** – highly personal information, such as sexual orientation or personal views about their relationship with family members. Staff will only share this information when there is a risk involved in not doing so.