

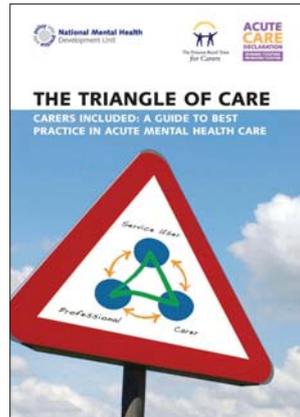
# THE TRIANGLE OF CARE

## PROJECT UPDATE



## About The Triangle of Care

The launch of the guide, [The Triangle of Care, Carers Included: A Guide to Best Practice in Mental Health Care](#), in July 2010 was the culmination of a number of years of research into the information and support that mental health carers need from service providers.



The guide is a valuable tool for:

- bringing together all mental health service providers
- sharing best practice and building on current practice
- self-assessing existing service provision
- offering support and encouragement to mental health providers to deliver best practice consistently.

Already well received, the guide had further validation when it was included in the Government's strategies for mental health and carer service provision and social inclusion – The Carers Strategy refresh in November 2010 and No Health without Mental Health in February 2011.

## What does The Triangle of Care mean for carers?

The Triangle of Care brings together many years of research with carers into what they feel will benefit them when involved with mental health services. It is based on six principles that mental health trusts can use to include and support carers. It explores what each principle means in practice and provides good practice examples. Although the examples are from England the principles apply to any mental health service provision.

## The six key principles:

- 1 Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 2 Staff are carer aware and trained in carer engagement strategies.
- 3 Policy and practice protocols re confidentiality and sharing information are in place.
- 4 Defined post(s) responsible for carers are in place.
- 5 A carer introduction to the service and staff is available, with a relevant range of information across the acute care pathway.
- 6 A range of carer support services is available along with a self-assessment tool.

Carers are often the only constant in the service user's mental health care journey. They are there when crisis occurs, when the person is well and when that person needs support with day-to-day activities. They often understand the service user's needs and condition extremely well and as such are a vital partner in care.

If professionals can recognise the support that carers give service users and acknowledge them as a key partner in care then service users will receive better care and support on their journey to recovery. Significantly, if carers are acknowledged and supported then they too are more likely to maintain or improve their own wellbeing.

*"The ethos of information sharing reassures us that this project is being taken seriously."*

**Carer**

“The formal recognition of the concept of The Triangle of Care is what carers have been requesting for many years. There are many benefits to all parties but perhaps above all it helps staff to recognise that carers and families are important members of the care team who very often have a key role to play in the care programme.”

**Carer**

## The Triangle of Care steering group

A national Triangle of Care steering group was established in October 2010 – chaired by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers (now Carers Trust). The group aims to ensure the project represents those working to improve carer support in mental health services and to drive forward good practice. Since the launch of the group, membership has continued to grow and includes three major mental health providers – Making Space, Mind and Rethink Mental Illness – Network Partners, representatives from the Royal College of Nursing and The Royal College of Psychiatrists, and over ten mental health trusts.

The group works actively to promote The Triangle of Care across England as well as supporting Carers Trust through engagement with carers, regional events and promotion to mental health trusts.

One of the first acts of the group was to support The Princess Royal Trust for Carers in writing to all mental health trusts in England asking them to commit to the project and become actively involved in The Triangle of Care network. Over a quarter of the mental health trusts responded positively to this letter and have now become involved in the project.

“Being part of The Triangle of Care steering group enables me to find out about what resources are available nationally. This saves me a lot of time searching for the resources and saves money.”

**Steering group member**

## Regional events

It has always been important to promote The Triangle of Care at a regional and local level to those delivering mental health services in the statutory and third sector. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, working in partnership with a local mental health trust and carers’ centre, planned a series of seven regional events to launch The Triangle of Care across England.

The events have been extremely popular with over 350 attendees. They have proved to be catalysts for enthusing frontline staff to take the initiative and begin work on The Triangle of Care principles on their wards or in their teams as well as building partnerships between statutory and third sector organisations.

“This event has certainly given me a lot to think about – how my service can improve carer involvement.”

**Event attendee**

“This event was inspiring. I feel it was inclusive and informative.”

**Event attendee**

“Excellent to have a nationally co-ordinated approach.”

**Event attendee**



## Regional groups

The success of the regional events led to the realisation that regional specific groups were needed to maintain momentum and to continue to build partnerships between the statutory and third sector.

So, in the autumn of 2011, we established groups in the North West and South West followed by London, the South East and the West Midlands.

32 mental health trusts are members of the regional groups (over half the mental health trusts in England), with a further 26 third sector providers in all regions as members.

The regional groups bring together regional neighbours and potential partners to share good practice and information, problem solve and support one another in implementing The Triangle of Care. All mental health trusts which are part of the groups are expected to complete a full Triangle of Care self-assessment by April 2013.

## National developments and next steps

In addition to the events and regional groups, we're planning a number of activities that will benefit the mental health community nationally, including:

- Drafting a guidance tool to assist mental health trusts to complete the self-assessment tool effectively.
- Planning a reprint of the original guide.
- Printing brief guidance leaflets for carers and staff to promote the benefits of the principles of The Triangle of Care.
- Carrying out research looking at the direct benefits for organisations which implement The Triangle of Care (subject to funding).
- Introducing a quality mark (subject to funding).



“A national network is invaluable. It enables the sharing of ideas and resources, and enables mutual support and encouragement. When we're flagging it helps to have a sense of a shared goal and the support of like-minded people to continue to strive for improved services.”

**Regional group member**

### Further information

- You can download a free copy of The Triangle of Care and find out more at <http://professionals.carers.org>
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