

## NSLHD Carer Support

### Overview

Northern Sydney Local Health District Carer Support Service is funded by NSW Health; our aim is to provide support for Carers of patients in the public health system and our community, and to initiate strategies at the local level to improve the responsiveness of the health system to the needs of Carers. Carer Support has a role in raising awareness of Carers' needs and changing attitudes towards Carers within the health system.

### Definition of Carer

A carer is an unpaid family member, or friend who supports those who are frail aged, disabled or chronically ill. The National Health Data Dictionary (12) notes the care provided is regular and sustained and by "people who may receive a pension or benefit for their caring role but it does not include paid or volunteer Carers organised by formal services" (p.98)

### Why is support for Carers required for Northern Sydney Local Health District?

Because of unique Carer knowledge and experience of the patient and their frequency of access across the spectrum of the health service they are the most informed community members to provide information on the patient journey. As quality monitors they can alert staff to potential problems before they occur and are pivotal to discharge success, reduced readmission rates and reduced LOS. Discharge planning tends to be more effective where Carers are involved.

The consistent identification of Carers within the acute care setting and effective engagement and support of Carers during admission, treatment and discharge, results in positive clinical outcomes and economic benefits to the Health service. The Carer Support Service staff contributes to the development of more person-centred healthcare where patients and their Carers are recognised as partners in healthcare.

### What can Carer Support Service Offer?

We aim to educate and support staff to identify and engage Carers, increase the understanding of health professionals to the expressed needs of Carers, identify and reduce access barriers to NSLHD services, and encourage the provision of timely and accurate information promoting Carer independence and empowerment.

Individual Carers may also contact Carer Support. We provide information, education and advice to assist Carers. And assistance if necessary to navigate the Health, Community Health and Community care systems to find the right service/s to assist in their caring role. Our website provides information on the plethora of services available: [www.nscchealth.nsw.gov.au/Carersupport/aboutus](http://www.nscchealth.nsw.gov.au/Carersupport/aboutus) The **Event Diary** link on our website provides a comprehensive range of information on local events, courses, seminars and support groups.

### How can you make a difference?

Every day, health care professionals meet family members and friends who are Carers. Carers can be assisted in the following ways:

- **Acknowledge** and **involve** the Carer in decisions regarding the patient's treatment where possible.
- **Communicate** with the Carer. This is critical for staff to understand the patient's needs, and for the Carer to understand treatment they may need to provide at home.
- **Ensure** the Carer has information relating to the patient's discharge plan to assist them with the transfer from hospital to home.
- **Advise** the Carer to read brochures that are located throughout our hospitals that may assist them with accessing core services in the community.
- **Encourage** the Carer to take care of their own health and wellbeing.

## **Young Carers**

Across Australia, over 390,000 children and young people help care for their relatives. Many Young Carers say that caring can be a great thing to do that they're proud of who they are and what they do, and that they have built up a whole swag of useful skills. However, Young Carers also say that caring affects how they feel, how much time they get to spend with friends, do their homework or hold down a job and that often they need some help. Young Carers are often hidden Carers, they are not readily recognised for the role they play or aware of services available to support them. Health workers can play an important role in educating and assisting the young person to access support brochures are available to connect Young Carers to support in this region. For more information on what's available, contact the young carer project officer at Northern Sydney Carer Support Service 8877 5349.

## **CALD Carers**

The Northern Sydney Carer Support Service recognises that CALD Carers may not readily identify as Carers and they may comprise a significant proportion of the 'Hidden Carer' population. CALD Carers face additional barriers than other Carers, such as language and communication difficulties, lack of understanding of community health care and disability support systems, (and the cultural competence of those services in responding to Carers from CALD backgrounds). There can also be issues with stigma around disability and mental illness, and fears around lack of confidentiality - particularly in smaller communities. CALD Carers often experience difficulty accessing information on services that will assist them in their caring role. Carer Support has a wide range of translated resources accessible on our intranet site. Further information and training can be accessed through our CALD Carer Support Officer who can be contacted on 66663 or 8877 5349.

## **Working/Workforce Carers**

Working Carers struggle to keep everything together while finding enough hours in the day. Some do not want to expose their personal lives at work, but sometimes falter under the stress of their multiple roles. Having a carer friendly workplace doesn't stop with recognising the Carers of our patients. It may well be that the nurse, allied health worker, senior manager or PSA is also a carer in their life outside the hospital walls. Staff who have a Caring role at home can register with our service and receive access to support and information.

## **Resources & Staff Education**

Carer Support has developed a range of resources, such as brochures and DVDs. Fact Sheets are available on many topics and in translated community languages from organisations such as Carers NSW, Alzheimer's Australia and Multicultural Health Communication Service.

In all of our hospitals, clinics and ward areas have been supplied with a blue **Carer Information folder** containing key resources available to assist staff and copies of the brochures supplied by our service. Folders and education sessions for staff are available by contacting the Carer Support Service on 8877 5349. Brochures are also made available throughout main access areas in our hospitals and clinics.

Carer Support promotes additional Staff education through emails on groupwise and by putting information on the Intranet and Internet sites.

## **Internet & Intranet**

Our website aims to provide as many links as possible to information and services to help Carers in their caring role. Visit us at:  
<http://www.nscchhs.health.nsw.gov.au/Carersupport/aboutus/003743067.shtml>

**The Carers Event Diary** is a valuable resource for Health services, NGOs and religious groups to promote events, courses and support groups for both Carers and the person they care for. The Carers **Event Diary** is available to the general public to both view and enter upcoming events via the Carer Support Internet Site  
[www.nscchealth.nsw.gov.au/carersupport/aboutus](http://www.nscchealth.nsw.gov.au/carersupport/aboutus)