

Mental Health services recognise that family members, friends and carers are very important in a person's recovery. They are the people who often see the symptoms of mental health issues first, they are often the people who encourage the person to seek help; they are the people who provide much of the emotional and practical support as the person engages with services and gets back on their feet.

## **A family sensitive service**

Family sensitive services recognise and value families and carers. They ensure that the facilities are welcoming and provide for families' needs. They ensure that all staff are courteous and warm. They address issues of privacy and confidentiality in a way that facilitates family involvement, and they involve families and carers in all aspects of the service.

## **Family involvement with consumers' care**

In Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, the Mental Health service aims to work collaboratively with family members and carers and involve them in the care provided. Family involvement may be through formal meetings, or informal interactions. The consumer's preferences are the starting point for family involvement and this may mean family members aren't involved at certain times. However it is recognised that families need certain information to carry out their caring role and staff will communicate what they can while issues that affect communication are explored and addressed. Staff can also offer information and support that address family members' own needs. More information about information sharing can be found on the 'Designated carer and principal care provider' information sheet.

## **Family and carer involvement in the Mental Health service**

Mental health services are required to collaborate with family members and carers, not only in relation to their family member's care, but also in relation to how the service is run. The Mental Health service has a Consumer and Carer Advisory Committee, with six consumers and six carers that meets monthly to consider new initiatives, procedures and publications. The committee can also raise issues of its own that they want the Mental Health service to address.

## **Further information**

A guide for family members and carers on patient information and privacy is available on the NSW Health website:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/carers/Pages/patient-info-privacy-brochure.aspx>

If you want to discuss your involvement in your family members care, it is best to contact the Team Leader or Manager directly concerned in the first instance. The phone numbers for each of the services' units and teams can be found on the Complete Contacts Guide.

If the matter remains unresolved, you can email: [NBMLHD-mail@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NBMLHD-mail@health.nsw.gov.au) and your concerns will be communicated to senior staff who will ensure the matter is addressed.

If you are interested in being involved in the Consumer and Carer Advisory Committee, or related projects, contact 4734 3178 for further information.

