Editorial – September 2018 Issue

The service has weathered the storm that was accreditation – phew! But wasn’t it wonderful for us to hear we are ‘first class’ in our meeting of Standard 2.0 – Partnering with Consumers (which includes carers, family and other support people)?

I am so proud of our carers, who work tirelessly to improve the Mental Health service. It is an endeavour we must continue to put energy into, using our strength to provide quality feedback about the services and make suggestions on how it can be improved.

On the whole, those who work in this service are here because they are passionate about making a difference in the lives of others. And I wanted to take this moment to thank the clinical and administrative teams who make up this service and who do their best to make a positive contribution.

As a carer, I recognize that they also are endeavoring wholeheartedly to keep those we love safe and to improve their quality of life and for that I am truly grateful.

**Hayley** | Carer Consultant
Mirrabooka/Osborne Park Hospital Community Clinics

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Meet Deb, our Carer Liaison and Education Officer at Lower West Older Adult Mental Health

Deb Skroza is our Carer Liaison and Education Officer at Lower West Older Adult Mental Health Service (OAMHS) and facilitates the Carer Support Group held monthly at Lower West Older Adult Mental Health Service, 6 Lemnos Street, Shenton Park.

Deb says to be eligible for the group, you must be caring for a person with a mental illness or behavioural difficulties related to dementia, and that person must reside within Lower West OAMHS catchment area. Referrals to this group are made via Lower West Social Work Department or through Deb. Continued on Page 3▶

**NMHS MH CARER SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Older Adult Carer Support Group**
Lower West meets monthly, 6 Lemnos St, Shenton Park.

For Carers of a person with mental illness or behavioural difficulties related to dementia and the person they care for resides in the Lower West. Access via the Lower West OAMHS Social Work Department, or Carer Liaison and Education Service on 9328 0800.

**Mirrabooka Carer Support Group**
meets 3rd Tuesday of every month, with one month focusing on ‘educational-based’ content and the alternate month an outings and support.

**Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital**
Inpatient Unit Carer Support Group
Servicing Carers of inpatients only. Access via Social Workers.

**Osborne Park Hospital Community Clinic, Mirrabooka Community Clinic**
Carer, Joondalup Community Clinic
Carer Peer Support Workers
Available upon request. Ask the Case Manager.

Let’s Talk About It…
by Lisa | Carer Consultant
Lower West Community Clinic

Consent vs Communication

With the focus on getting the consumer’s consent on who a clinician may talk to in relation to their mental illness, it is important to remember there is a difference between consent and communication.

Balancing the wishes and rights to confidentiality of a person experiencing a mental illness, with the families and carers need to give and receive important information and advice, is an important consideration.

This can be a grey area, which may cause frustration and distress, affecting the carer’s wellbeing.

Clinicians have a duty of care to ensure carers are listened to and advised accordingly, without breaching consumers trust and rights.

Carers have a responsibility to respect the right to privacy of the person they are caring for, but not at the risk of their own wellbeing and safety.

As families, carers and supporters, we play a fundamental role in supporting people with mental illness and are a valuable resource. We need to speak up about issues that concern us, where possible. By asking questions if we are not satisfied that we have enough information to positively participate in our caring responsibilities, we help to improve the level of care for our loved one.

Western Australia’s Mental Health Act 2014 now provides greater protection for Clinicians and people with a mental illness, but also facilitates communicating and engaging with families and carers.

The Case Manager is the best person to speak to about any concerns you may have related to the person in your care, as they are your first point of contact. Other concerns may be raised in meetings with the doctor or other clinical professional.

I acknowledge that this is a difficult balancing act and that it is not always handled to the satisfaction of carers, but that the intention of staff at NMHS MH is to give the best possible care to the consumer.

Self-Care Tips
Doing Something For You

It is too easy to forget who is the most important person in your world – You!

Therefore, you are encouraged to do something for yourself every day.

It doesn’t have to be something big, just something to nurture your spirit.

Examples may be:
- Reading a book or watching TV
- Going for a walk
- Sitting in the garden
- Chatting with a friend
- Getting your hair done or a massage
- Having a coffee in a café
- Listening to music, singing or playing an instrument
- Dancing
- Doing some arts and crafts
- Taking a nap
- Doing some gardening
- Writing
- Cooking
- Prayer
- Meditation

Whatever makes you feel good and remember that you matter!

1 Photo credit: Kim Pedler
Resilience is Mine
by Hayley | Carer Consultant | Stirling Community Clinic

No, you cannot take it back.
You can’t have my ability
To push through the hard days,
To continue to love,
When all that is in me wants to reject.

No, you cannot take it back.
You can’t have my ability
To see sunshine through the clouds,
To always chase after the hope that things will change
And I will know peace, despite the storm that surrounds me.

Just as I cannot give you back the memories of better days that fill me with hope,
You cannot take back my ability to overcome this trial,
Nor my faith that I will rise above the challenge that is caring.

Resilience is mine!
And you cannot take it back.

Feedback: Carers Speak About Our Services

SCGH MHU
"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking such good care of (name removed for privacy) throughout her treatment. Your caring, professional manner and humour was appreciated. Nothing was ever too much trouble or treated as trivial".

Centre for Clinical Intervention
"Thank you for your help whilst we were in the program, it was a very challenging and distressing time for all of our family and your support was fantastic. My daughter is now attending university and living a life we didn’t think possible at one stage"

Hospital in the Home (HiTH), Graylands
"I have had several members of staff looking after me, they were all absolutely wonderful, caring, empathetic and good listeners. They often had constructive suggestions. I would like the staff to be congratulated."

SCGH Mental Health Unit
“The unit is life changing in a very positive way. The psychiatrist led multidisciplinary teams are key to the success in the management of patients. The staff and facilities are superb and make the unit a true place of healing”. In patient April-May.

Joondalup Community ICTOT team
Parent of a current ICTOT consumer wrote to his case manager and said- "All I can say is a very big THANKYOU. You have always gone over and above and I just wanted to let you know that you are truly appreciated and loved very much for all the good that you are trying to do at all times with your clients. I can only go by what I have seen, you have done for my son and the care factor that you have is unbelievable. Once again A HUGE THANK YOU TO YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO FOR MY SON AND ALSO MYSELF. I really do not know what I would do if it wasn’t for your caring."

The support group offers understanding and support in a safe environment. It provides carers an opportunity to hear the stories and experiences of others, gaining insight into different perspectives.

Through these groups, carers can explore issues and identify tools and strategies to help manage their caring role, adapt to changes and build personal strengths and resilience. Carers gain information of the medical condition they are caring for, through the support group via education provided.

As the coordinator and facilitator, Deb engages other clinicians at Lower West and often involves guest speakers from Carers WA, Centrelink and other organisations relevant to carers.

If you would like to join this group, or find out more information, please contact Deb on 08 9328 0820.
Helping Minds provides professional, quality, confidential support and services to children, youth, adults and families who are caring for someone with a mental illness or individuals who are affected by mental illness.

The majority of their services are free of charge and focus on: advocacy, education, counselling and support, rest, recreation and respite services.

Helping Minds offers:

- **Information and Support**: Includes information about mental illnesses, signs and symptoms to be aware of, including guidance and reassurance through difficult times.

- **Peer Support Workers**: Carer Peer Support workers have a lived experience of caring for a person with mental illness and can provide support by understanding the challenges you face.

- **Advocacy**: Helping you to navigate the Mental Health system and understand your rights.

- **Counselling**: Provided by professionals, is available to help you work through issues, such as the change in your relationship with the person who has become unwell, grief and loss due to the illness, communication and coping skills and what to say and what not to say.

- **Carer Support Groups**: Available in the Perth metro and WA regional areas. Regular meetings are held to enable carers to come together, offer support and share their experiences, coping skills, information on available treatments and relevant agencies.

- **Rest Recreation & Respite**: Includes Short-break getaways; massage & pamper treatments; school holiday young carer camps (8-17 years old); Perth accommodation for country carers visiting loved ones in Perth; recreation programs for adults diagnosed with mental illness; sporting and social activities design around individual's interests and a range of fitness levels; and links to activities in your local area.

Follow this link to watch stories of other carer’s testimonials:


Contact **Helping Minds** by calling **9427 7100**.
“Siblings are the people we practice on, the people who teach us about fairness and cooperation and kindness and caring – quite often the hard way.” – Pamela Dugdale

Sibling Carers Perspective

Anonymous

My Brother

Frustration, guilt and sadness...these are the three words that describe my experience of having a sibling with mental illness.

There is frustration that the relapse happened again; he was doing so well.

Frustration at the impact it has on my family, my parents giving everything to help him live and losing their lives in the process.

There is guilt for focusing on my own feelings, being preoccupied with how this affects me.

How could I be so selfish when I know the reasons for the relapse is his unbearable pain?

There is guilt for going to work, having friends, traveling and having fun. I have a big world I’m ready to explore and that excites me but that same world frightens and hurts my brother.

How is it fair that we have such different deals in life? I’m moving forward and leaving him stuck in the shadows.

Finally, there is overwhelming sadness that as much as I tried I couldn’t save him this time.

I felt so powerful that I wanted to distance myself so I don’t hurt anymore. I just wanted to stop caring. But I can’t. No matter how much I distance yourself I will always care.

I wonder if he knows that, that I will always care about him? He is my big brother who taught me how to tie my shoe laces. No matter how many times he hurts himself and us in the process, I will always care. That’s the hard thing. I care. I care for someone who is hurting so much that they don’t act like they care for me. I know I’m not strong enough to keep saving him but my mum is strong enough to keep trying.

My house is built on three pillars: My brother, my parents and myself. My job is to love and support my parents so they can keep holding up my brother. That’s something I can do.

When you have a sibling with mental illness you often feel helpless, like there is nothing you can do, but I have found my small role.

My goal is to build the best relationship with my brother as I can. I don’t know how to do that right now, or what that relationship will even look like. This is hard with someone who hurts so much they self-destruct.

Sometimes it is too much for me to watch a loved one like that.

I know that first off I need to look after myself and my own mental health.

Sometimes this means distance between us and I have learnt not to feel guilty for that.

If I am stronger then I can focus on the good. If I am not strong enough to be there for him, I will be there for those who can, my mum.