

# The Triangle of Care: carers included

---

Ruth Hannan

Ruth Hannan is a Policy and Development Manager at Carers Trust, London, UK.

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to describe the Triangle of Care, a project designed to provide a guide to professionals on how to better include and support carers in mental health services.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *The paper presents a case study of the Triangle of Care.*

**Findings** – *The Triangle of Care provides an opportunity for services to address their obligations to carers and service users alike whilst improving their own skills and knowledge.*

**Originality/value** – *The paper offers insights into the project and provides a link for further information.*

**Keywords** *Support, Carers, Mental health services*

**Paper type** *Case study*

The Triangle of Care was originally developed by a group of carers (including Alan Worthington, the author of *The Triangle of Care*) as a means to guide professionals on how to better include and support carers in inpatient mental health services. It aims to build a therapeutic alliance between carers, service users and professionals and to consider the needs of all carers including young carers. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers supported the publication of a guide about *The Triangle of Care* in 2010 in partnership with the National Mental Health Development Unit. (Carers Trust is a new charity formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care). Recently updated, and available online from Carers Trust, the guide outlines the six standards required to ensure that carers are fully included and supported during a service user's admission to an inpatient unit; it supports these standards with a rationale for inclusion, good practice examples and a self-assessment tool enabling services to monitor their progress to full implementation.

It quickly became apparent that the standards set out in the guide were applicable across the whole mental health care pathway and for all types of mental health care. As Carers Trust now leads on the project, supported by a national Triangle of Care Steering Group, it was decided to expand the scope of the project to work across all mental health services and promote the standards and good practice across England.

Since the original launch of the guide the project has gone from strength to strength with nine regional events held around England and regional groups established to bring together statutory and third sector partners to share good practice, problem solve and support one another to achieve implementation of *The Triangle of Care*. There are 48 statutory mental health providers (over 80 per cent) in England involved in the project and over 30 third sector organisations including a number of Carers Trust's Network Partners – independently managed local services for carers. To recognise the good work being achieved in the regional groups a formal membership scheme has been developed; this enables trusts to formally commit to self-assessing all their services and working towards fully embedding the standards. To date, 11 trusts have joined the membership scheme with more expected to come on board.

A Triangle of Care Learning Event was held in Manchester in May which saw presentations from a number of organisations talking about their experiences of the challenges and successes of implementing the Triangle of Care. Common criticism of the Triangle of Care is that it is only

suitable for acute mental health services and doesn't consider the challenges of specialised mental health services including forensic services; to acknowledge this the event saw a presentation from Ashworth High Secure Hospital which has worked hard to implement the Triangle of Care standards into its specific service model. As Ruth Hannan, Policy and Development Manager (Mental Health) at Carers Trust said: "If they can do it, anyone can".

The next two years of the project see further promotion of the membership scheme, research into good practice in mental health respite as well as possible expansion of the project into Scotland and Wales. Carers Trust has also just begun work with the Royal College of Nursing to adapt the Triangle of Care for use in general hospitals to support carers of people with dementia when that person is admitted to hospital.

The Triangle of Care provides an opportunity for services to address their obligations to carers and service users alike whilst improving their own skills and knowledge. More information on the Triangle of Care can be found at: <http://professionals.carers.org/health/articles/triangle-of-care,6802,PR.html>

For more information on Carers Trust and the services offered locally see [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

### **Corresponding author**

Ruth Hannan can be contacted at: [rhannan@carers.org](mailto:rhannan@carers.org)

---

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: [reprints@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:reprints@emeraldinsight.com)  
Or visit our web site for further details: [www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints)