

## **Carer Engagement Policy**

## 1 The Vision for Carer Engagement

In the current Strategy and Business Plan, Carers Support West Sussex (CSWS) has the following vision:

For all family and friend carers across West Sussex to:

- Be listened to and valued
- Have their rights and needs met
- Be give a strong voice in shaping carer support and services

CSWS is committed to placing carers at the heart of all we do to achieve the best possible personal outcomes for every carer. This includes: helping carers to play a full role in developing and delivering CSWS services and other local support; supporting carers as volunteers; recruiting and supporting carers who express interest and who have the appropriate and required skills to become paid members of staff or CSWS Trustee Directors; encouraging and supporting carers to develop and deliver their own services.

In this way we hope to maintain CSWS as a truly 'carer-led' organisation in which carer engagement and communication is central in everything we do. CSWS Communications and Media services will proactively support our aims.

## 2 Principle of Policy

This policy applies to the Trustees, staff, volunteers and carers who are registered with CSWS.

The Policy needs to be read in conjunction with CSWS strategies and policies: Equality and Diversity; Compliments and Complaints; Communications and Marketing.

The Policy links to the *West Sussex Joint Commitment to Family & Friends Carers* 2015- 2020 (Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, Horsham and Mid Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, Crawley Commissioning Group, West Sussex County Council). Also to West Sussex County Council customer and carer engagement and consultation services and NHS patient and carer involvement policies and plans.

Encouraging and collating carer feedback and themes and lobbying for wider engagement is a key component of our work.

### 3 Definitions

A carer defined in this policy is a family or friend carer who is unpaid. An unpaid carer may be family, a friend, parent or partner caring for someone with additional needs, an illness, frailty, disability or drug or alcohol problem. So when we use the term carer in this policy we mean anyone who has extra responsibilities of looking after or helping to look after someone.

### 4 Aims and Values

CSWS believes that carer engagement is important because services that reflect and take into account the experience, needs and wishes of carers are more likely to be effective and result in positive, personal outcomes. Carers are the best people to determine how their own needs should be met.

This policy aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Promote self-esteem of carers who participate
- Raise carer expectations
- Promote partnerships to improve service quality
- Reduce conflict and exclusion
- Find new ways to enhance and improve services and develop new services
- Inform CSWS strategies

All carers should have the opportunity to:

- Inform and influence CSWS's Service Development - planning, shaping, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, training and recruitment of staff
- Make informed choices about the support they receive
- Be informed about their services and rights, including equal opportunities, complaints, health & safety, etc.
- Be listened to and supported by CSWS Trustees, staff and volunteers

### 5 Approach

CSWS is committed to offer opportunities for involvement at all stages in a carer's contact with the organisation. Carer Engagement may be related to individual support, the wider organisation or making representation to other carer-related partners and organisations. Carers will have the opportunity to engage with CSWS at every stage and join CSWS Carers Voice Network.

Support and training for involvement with the Network will be given as appropriate.

## 6 Carer Engagement in their own Service

Staff, Trustees and volunteers will ensure that all carers:

- Are engaged in defining what they want from the services they are offered by CSWS
- Can easily feedback their views and are engaged in regular qualitative reviews of services
- Are able to talk to someone independent if they have a difficulty that cannot be resolved with the person concerned
- Are involved in CSWS Compliments and Complaints process
- Have the opportunity to join CSWS Carers Voice Network

## 7 Recruitment and Selection

Wherever possible there will be carer involvement in all recruitment of staff, trustees and volunteers. Interview panels will include a carer who will be appropriately trained and supported wherever possible. In addition carers will help review and influence job descriptions.

## 8 Evaluation and monitoring

CSWS will work with carers to continually improve service quality. To build on existing experience the organisation will work with carers to improve techniques for monitoring and evaluation. Interested carers will be involved in offering feedback on CSWS's services via feedback forms, Focus Groups, mobile-friendly or on-line arrangements and membership of our Carers Voice Network.

Using this feedback will be part of CSWS Evaluation and Monitoring Framework. Comments, compliments and complaints from carers will be monitored and reviewed with necessary action taken and outcomes will be fed back.

## 9 Governance

Where appropriate and where carers have the required interest, skills and aptitude CSWS will encourage and support carers who would like to become Trustees. This support will include enhanced training and personal support, including opportunities for separate communication and discussion to prepare for meetings.

## 10 Strategic Planning

Carers will be encouraged to take part in Strategic and Business Planning consultation, events, policy making and activities that determine the vision and direction of CSWS development.

## 11 Training

Carers may be able to access internal or external training opportunities to support them to develop skills and participate in services. We will aim to involve carers in training trustees, staff and volunteers in carer issues.

## 12 New Service Development

All new services will be developed in partnership with carers, incorporating the knowledge and experience of carers who will benefit. No new service will be approved for development without evidence of carer engagement and influence.

## 13 Carers Becoming Staff, Trustees or Volunteers

CSWS believes that carers can bring unique understanding and empathy to staff, trustee and volunteer roles and we encourage carers to apply for roles and other opportunities within the organisation. Every application is subject to the Equal Opportunities processes.

## 14 Professional Boundaries

Staff, Trustees and volunteers are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate professional and personal boundaries with carers in order to maintain a safe, supportive and confidential relationship and environment.

To do this, staff, Trustees and volunteers should:

- **Ensure engagement is time bound:** Working within contracted hours allows carers to be supported within a timely manner, and builds trust and reliability with the service rather than an individual person.
- **Know the role(s) and responsibilities of their position:** Explaining your role clearly to carers, including both what you can and cannot do, manages carers expectations and ensures they receive the appropriate support.
- **Be mindful of self-disclosure:** It is important to establish a rapport with carers by providing a friendly and accessible service, which may involve sharing personal experiences and information. It is up to each staff, Trustee or volunteer to establish the purpose of self-disclosure (i.e. whose needs does it serve – the carers or yours?)

Ongoing support about establishing and maintaining professional boundaries with carers should also be sought through line managers (e.g. discuss during supervision meetings).

## 15 Accessibility

We make an effort to ensure that our services are accessible to everyone and as user friendly as possible. We endeavour to provide information in a suitable format when requested (braille, large text etc.).

<https://www.carerssupport.org.uk/accessibility/>

## 16 Language Provisions

We have provisions in place for carers whose first language is not English, including the option to access our website in over 100 different languages, use of a professional translating service (including Sign Language) if required, and use of bilingual staff whose job it is to undertake interpretation as part of their role.

To uphold impartiality and avoid concerns over bias and confidentiality; staff, Trustees and volunteers who have not been trained, or who do not have interpreting as part of their role specification, are not used to interpret.

There are three main exceptions to this:

- In an emergency/crisis situation where clear communication is needed immediately, and there is either no time to get an interpreter, or communication is needed whilst waiting for scheduled interpreting. In this situation, a member of staff who is present may be used.
- It is acceptable for staff communicating basic information (i.e. giving details about a particular support group) to act as an interpreter if they possess the knowledge of the appropriate language or communication skill.
- If speaking a particular language is part of the person specification for a role and the staff member is employed to speak that language, for example, as part of Specialist Services, then this isn't classed as interpreting as they will be speaking directly to a carer in their chosen language as part of their role.

More information about how we support inclusivity of all communities can be found online: <https://www.carerssupport.org.uk/caring-for/supporting-all-communities/>

## 17 Opportunities

Carers will have a range of opportunities to become involved. "Be the Voice" training will be provided for carers who join the Carers Voice Network and want to engage in a more proactive way. Carer Engagement with carers is very inclusive and a cultural way of working across CSWS.

Examples are given in the table below. CSWS will also have a more detailed Carers Voice Network Operational Plan which will be reviewed quarterly which carers will help to shape including identifying and developing the Network's goals.

Range of Engagement Opportunities	Examples
All carers registered with CSWS are listened to and engaged at some level and can easily express their views, including about CSWS services.	<p>Routinely invited and encouraged to feedback on CSWS service provision (including complaints) via Carer Feedback surveys.</p> <p>Can pass on their views very easily using a known system (i.e. filling out online carer feedback form available on the website) and receive a CSWS response.</p>
Carers Voice Network: Engage at a local level	<p>Help CSWS shape their service: interview new staff; help plan activities and events; advice on improving services.</p> <p>Pledge to support Carer Friends initiative and help build a network around carers.</p>
Carers Voice Network: Engage at a local and regional level	<p>Participate in surveys or meetings to help develop strategies, policy and procedures to support carers in West Sussex and South East England.</p> <p>Become a member of the Carers Planning Group to promote local and national events, such as Carers Week and Carers Rights Day.</p> <p>Fundraise for CSWS as a Carer Wellbeing charity.</p>
Carers Voice Network: Engage at a regional and national level	<p>Make change and influence society to campaign for carers' rights and issues at a regional and national level.</p> <p>Get involved in national organisations such as Carers UK and Carers Trust.</p>