

# The common core principles for working with carers

Skills for Care and Skills for Health have worked with key stakeholders, including carers, to develop a national (England) set of Common Core Principles for Working with Carers. These principles are intended to be the foundation upon which good practice is built. They are intended to reinforce, challenge and help to change practice when working with carers. Their purpose is to challenge organisations and individuals who work with carers to reflect on their behaviours, attitudes and actions towards carers, encouraging organisations to enable carers to be the heart of the health and social care system and be recognised and supported by wider sectors of society also. The Common Core Principles for Working with Carers are embedded in every part of 'Carers Matter – Everybody's Business'.

Skills for Care and Skills for Health, working with Solihull Carers Centre, have produced a DVD. 'The Common Core Principles for Working with Carers' speaks to carers in Solihull to understand what the principles really mean in practice. You can view clips from this DVD at: [http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0377DA44E24FB400&feature=view\\_all](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0377DA44E24FB400&feature=view_all)

## **1. Carers are equal partners in care. Recognise that over time, carers become experts with skills that are to be valued and appreciated.**

In practice this means:

- Workers should have relationships with carers that acknowledge their expertise and skills, building mutual respect and a valued partnership.
- Carers may have skills that can be shared but also have skills that they need to acquire.

## **2. Make no assumptions, regarding a carer's capacity or carers' capacities and willingness to take responsibility for, or to continue to care.**

In practice this means:

- Workers should take into account the history and context of the caring role and how this might play a part in how a carer sees their ability or willingness to carry on caring.
- No assumptions that someone will take on a caring role should be made on the basis of family relationships or cultural stereotypes.
- As circumstances change, there will need to be an on-going dialogue between carer and worker to ascertain their views on the continuation and on-going needs of the caring role.

## **3. Support carers to be as physically and mentally well as possible and prevent ill health.**

In practice this means:

- Workers will have awareness and understanding that carers can often have poorer physical and mental health than that of the general population and miss out on opportunities to keep well due to their caring role.
- Workers will promote and offer opportunities to enable carers to 'stay at their best' by identifying support needs that enable a life outside caring.
- Workers will recognise and value that carers have roles outside of caring and enable carers to maintain valued relationships and interests.

#### **4. Work together to involve all carers in decision making, and choices at all levels and at all stages in the caring role in a positive, timely and proactive way, following best practice in sharing information.**

In practice this means:

- Workers will support and encourage the unique viewpoint of carers, supporting the carer to be involved and enabling them to feel of equal status.
- Workers will involve carers in all aspects of decision making, both on a one to one basis in respect of everyday care or a strategic level, planning services for the future.
- Workers will acknowledge that the carer may have different views from that of the cared for person and the views of all interested parties should be considered and balanced where possible.
- Issues around confidentiality will not be used to avoid listening to carers, nor for failing to discuss fully with service users the need for carers to receive information so that they can continue to care.
- Workers will support carers within the framework of safeguarding and decision making legislation when there is an issue about the safety or capacity of the cared for person.

#### **5. Provide care and support with flexibility and understanding in a personalised way that reflects the circumstances, cultural background and lifestyle of the carer and the person cared for.**

In practice this means:

- Carers come from diverse backgrounds and each will have built up a pattern or routine of caring that reflects this individual lifestyle.
- The carer's lifestyle and culture may not be shared by the person cared for.
- Workers should strive to acknowledge, understand and maintain this when engaging other services to support the person being cared for.
- Workers will encourage support that recognises established care patterns and cultural background.

#### **6. Respect and recognise that carers will have their own support needs, rights and aspirations, which may be different from that of the cared for person.**

In practice this means:

- Workers will recognise that carers are also individuals who have needs themselves and workers should always strive to understand these needs and respond in a way that reflects individual needs and/or choices.
- Workers should recognise that this may at times involve an assessment of risk and the need to respond appropriately and manage this proportionately.
- Workers will recognise that carers have legal rights, including a right to an assessment of need in their own right.

**7. Identify, support and enable children and young people who are carers to be children and young people as well as carers. Provide a safe environment and protection from harm ensuring they have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive and enjoy positive childhoods.**

In practice this means:

- Young carers generally care for a member of their own family. They have a right to a family life with well-supported parents.
- Workers should always be vigilant to their existence and offer support and encouragement to prevent social isolation.
- Young carers will be listened to and supported by the people who support their parents, siblings and relatives.

**8. Recognise the experience of carers as the caring role ends and after it has ended and offer support to carers accordingly.**

In practice this means:

- Carers needs' will change as the person they care for either no longer needs their care, the carer no longer provides the care or the cared for person dies.
- Workers will recognise these changing needs, the support required and the potential on-going nature of this support.

