



PRESS RELEASE

TO:
COMPANY
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Carers Mental Health Forum

“It is important that we work closely with the families of people who become ill because they know the person best”, said Maureen Rafferty an Occupational Therapist working with the Early Intervention in Psychosis Service at a recent meeting of the Mental Health Carers Forum organised by Gateshead Crossroads.

The Early Intervention team works with people between the ages of 14 and 35 and their methodology is modelled on successful work done in Scandinavia. This showed that people’s chances of recovering from major mental health problems are much greater if a holistic approach is adopted from the first onset of psychosis.

Referral to the service at present is through General Practitioners and Community Mental Health Teams but more direct access by individuals to the service by telephone is planned by 2008. Early intervention reduced the amount of time people spent in hospital and improved rates of recovery from illness.

The team are beginning to deliver training on the early detection of psychosis in schools and colleges throughout Gateshead. Carers at the meeting felt that this would have a good effect on reducing the stigma still attached to mental illness as well as helping to identify young people who needed help.

Carers were particularly pleased to hear from Maureen how the team value the support that family members give and are keen to keep them involved. Too often carers felt undervalued by professionals who had a “we know best” attitude and didn’t listen to them.

Following a lively discussion, Joe Lewis from Gateshead Crossroads on behalf of the Mental Health Carers Forum, thanked Maureen for her informative presentation.

The Forum provides opportunities for carers and ex-carers to support each other and exchange views and experiences, to become better informed about mental health and carer issues, and to work to improve the way mental health services engage with carers of people who suffer from mental ill-health.

The Mental Health Carers Forum meets monthly and is open to anyone who looks after or supports someone who suffers or has suffered mental distress. Contact **Joe Lewis on 0191 478 2423** for further details.

Facts and Figures

- 1 adult in 8 is a Carer¹
- Men are almost as likely to be a Carer as women¹
- 33% of Carers say they have not had a break in the last two years
- Nearly a quarter of all Carers have been looking after someone for at least 10 years¹
- Over a third of Carers report that no-one else helps them care¹
- Three in five people will become a Carer at some point in their lives²
- In the UK there are six million carers who save the state an estimated £57 billion a year.

¹ General Household Survey 1995, published 1998

² Carers UK