

# Cygnet Carer, Family & Friend Strategy

2023 - 2025

## Foreword

Cygnets purpose is to make a positive difference in the lives of the individuals we care for, their loved ones and all those who work with us.

The Cygnets Carer, Family & Friend Strategy sets out how we will engage and support families and carers across our services to enable us to provide outstanding, safe, high-quality services for every individual in our care, and their loved ones.

Caring for people can be an opportunity to experience the joy that being compassionate can bring, but it can also be a challenging and stressful experience.

At Cygnets, we believe carers should be able to seek the support they need when they need it. Collaboration with carers, families and friends, of individuals who use our services, and other key stakeholders with lived experience is, therefore, integral to developing this strategy.

Co-production sits at the heart of the Cygnets Carer, Family & Friend Strategy. We will facilitate a range of opportunities for discussion and feedback across carers' councils, workshops and one-to-one conversations in all service areas to shape our plan.

Through initial discussions with key stakeholders, we have agreed six focus areas. These are set out in the strategy with clear action plans to support each priority.

Cygnets organisational values underpin the Cygnets Carer, Family & Friend Strategy; care, respect, empower, trust and integrity. These values are at the heart of what we do as individuals and as an organisation, from our interactions with people who use Cygnets services and carers, the ways that staff relate to each other, and the quality to which services are provided.

## Carers' Network Voice

- This strategy aims to provide a clear direction regarding Cygnets communication and collaboration with carers.
- The strategy acknowledges the partnership strengths of working with and supporting carers and families as their loved ones access Cygnets services.
- This strategy provides a framework with measurable priorities, and by adopting the Triangle of Care alongside the recognition of legislation, the company is embracing working in partnership.



Improving lives together

**Integrity**

**Trust**

**Empower**

**Respect**

**Care**

*We have Integrity*

Guided by a strong moral code, we act with the best intentions and for the right reasons; making person-centred decisions based on individual assessment.

*We Trust*

Forming the basis of our therapeutic and working relationships, we work hard to build and maintain trust.

*We Empower*

We empower people to make informed decisions and forge their own path. We encourage people to take every opportunity.

*We Respect*

We treat people fairly as individuals. We understand the strength that lies in our diversity. We ensure people have the ability and support to make a positive difference.

*We Care*

We listen to each other and care for each other. We care deeply about everyone who is part of the Cygnnet community.

## Who is the Strategy for?

Cygnnet's Carer, Family & Friend Strategy is aimed at carers of all ages and experiences.

Not everyone will identify with the term 'carer', and so in the context of this strategy, we define carers as: *people who provide unpaid help and support to a family member, a friend or an individual who would otherwise not be able to manage.*

## Vision Cultural Changes

Cygnnet's vision is to ensure carers, families and friends have a sense of belonging to ensure their diversity of background and life experience bring different insights, create challenge and encourage change and innovation.

Our vision supports government policy for carers, but most importantly, the plan reflects what carers have told us is important to them when supporting people using our services.

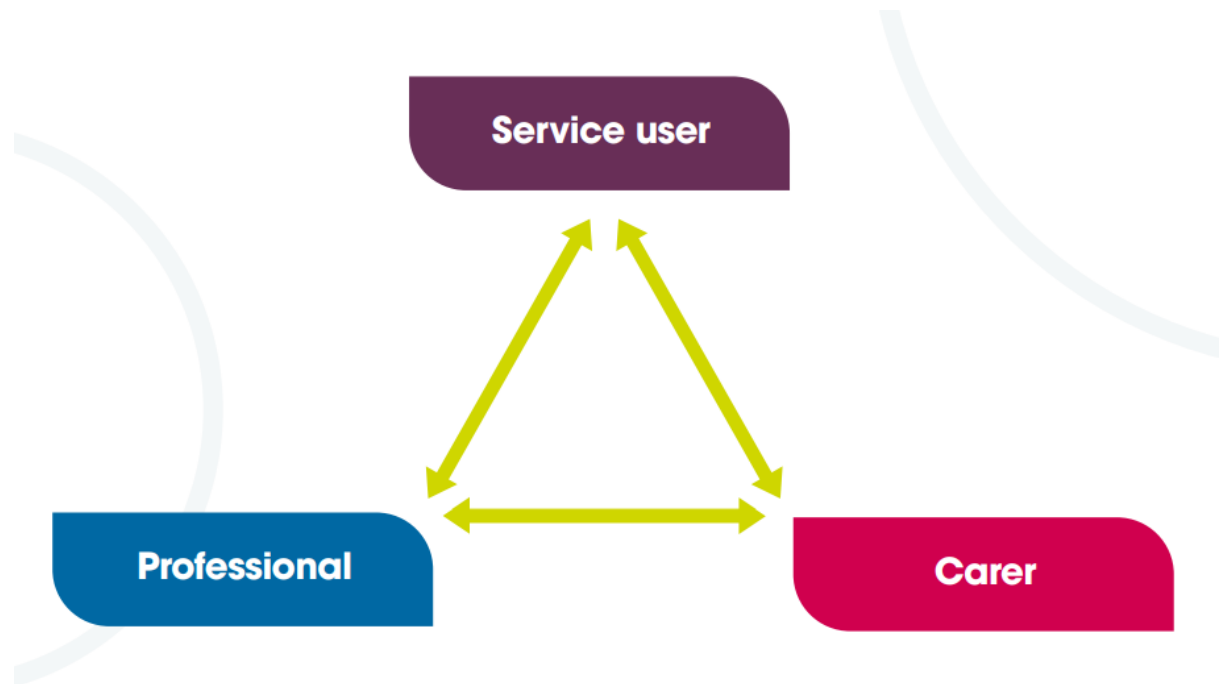
During the period of this strategy (2023 - 2025), we will aim to:

- Consult      Provide involvement opportunities (e.g. service user and carer forums)
- Co-Design    Work together with families and carers to devise improvements
- Co-Produce   Professionals will empower families and carers to lead and produce projects

## Triangle of Care - How We Will Deliver Our Strategy

Cygnet's overall aim is to continue to find ways of working with carers, families and friends so they feel informed and engaged in the care of the service user they support as much as possible.

The Triangle of Care model is an integral part of our strategy. It highlights the importance of meaningful involvement and inclusion of carers, families and friends, leading to better care and outcomes for all.



### The six key standards of the Triangle of Care state that:

1. Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. Staff are 'carer aware' and trained in carer engagement strategies.
3. Policy and practice protocols regarding confidentiality and sharing information, are in place.
4. Defined post(s) responsible for carers are in place.
5. A carer introduction to the service and staff is available, with a relevant range of information across the care pathway.
6. A range of carer support services is available.

# Cygnets Priorities

Through our work with carers, the people who use Cygnets services, staff and our partnerships, we have agreed to embed the Triangle of Care and in doing so create meaningful partnerships between all of us involved in this work.

The Triangle of Care is a nationally developed model which will thread throughout our priorities and carer pathway. The following are the priorities identified and are broadly representative of the six key national standards:

1. Identifying and recognising carers.
2. Defined post(s) responsible for carers are in place.
3. Staff are 'carer aware' and trained in carer engagement.
4. Policy and practice protocols for sharing and co-producing information with families and carers.
5. Supporting family and carers by providing or sign-posting support services available.
6. Improving the involvement of families and carers

## 1. Identifying and Recognising Carers

Many people do not recognise themselves as a carer; they see themselves just as a relative, friend or neighbour helping someone. This means that carers sometimes miss out on the support they need.

Early identification of family and carers is paramount, and they should be encouraged to identify themselves and understand their rights. By helping people to self-identify as an unpaid carer or raising awareness so that others can recognise that they are providing care, Cygnets can open up access to information and other forms of support. This is an important first step to ensuring an unpaid carer can access support.

They should be guided to information and advice as early as possible in order to make informed decisions and understand the impact of their caring role.

To support this, we will:

- 1.1 Review the admission paperwork to ensure information can be recorded to identify who is the carer, family & friend, and who has any legal instrument in place e.g. LPA, or Deputyship.
- 1.2 Review the admission and discharge policy to ensure the role and needs of the carer are recognised.
- 1.3 Have a number of Carer Champions (staff who have an identified role in supporting carers) at sites.
- 1.4 Offer carers the opportunity to feedback on their experiences through the Carers' Experience Survey Questionnaire.
- 1.5 Cygnets will involve carers as experts.
- 1.6 Cygnets will ensure there is a straightforward process of sign-posts in place that support carers if there is a crisis once the person is discharged.

## 2. **Defined Post(s) Responsible for Carers are in Place.**

Professionals need to understand and value carers' skills and insights to ensure that support for them and the cared-for person is as good as possible.

Effective collaboration with carers includes empowering them with information about the types of support available and choices over how it is delivered. However, it is important to recognise that some carers may find it challenging to participate properly due to their own heavy caring commitments and may be excluded, especially from more intensive carer participation. And some carers will have legal instruments in place that mean as a court appointed deputy they are the decision maker within the order of the court.

To support this, we will:

- 2.1 Cygnet will ensure all sites have a defined post responsible for carers in place.
- 2.2 Cygnet will develop Regional Carer Leads, which will report to the Head of Carers to discuss local and regional carer needs.
- 2.3 Cygnet already has many effective processes in place to support carers. Cygnet knows that particular aspects of caring remain challenging and Cygnet will build on the existing structures that work while addressing things that need to be improved by listening to carers and formulating solutions and plans.

## 3. **Staff are 'Carer Aware' and Trained in Carer Engagement**

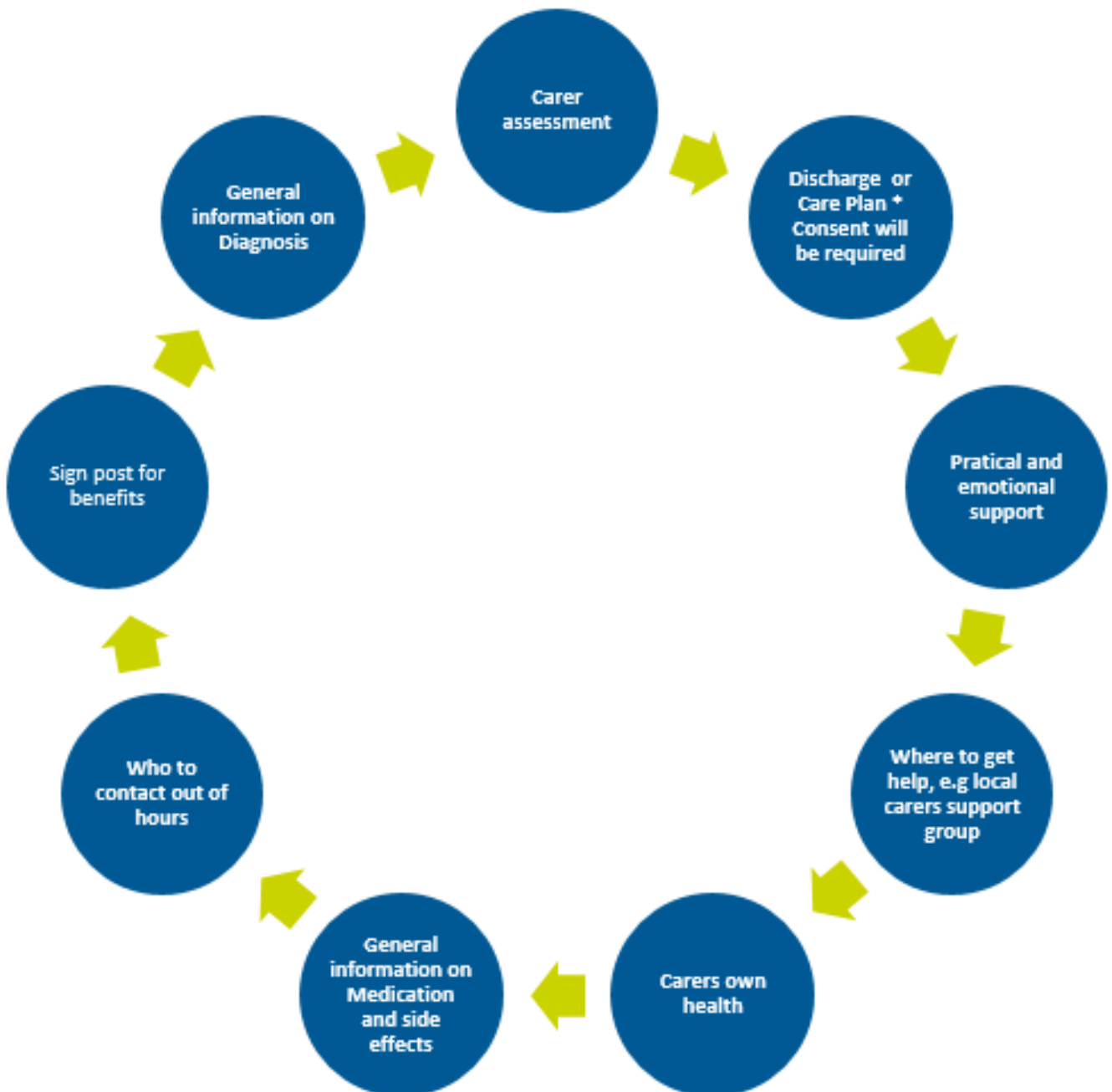
Carers need professionals to be 'carer aware' to ensure staff recognise the importance of unpaid carers in all areas of social and health care systems. They need to be carer aware in a way which supports professional practice and improves the outcomes for patients and patients.

To support this

- 3.1 Staff will have training and will knowledgably be able to actively sign post carers to local community support networks, including support from other carers (peer support) and support to improve life outside of caring.
- 3.2 Cygnet will provide information to carers so they will have access to education to improve their understanding of health conditions, behaviours, medication etc.
- 3.3 Cygnet will provide Carer Networks so carers will have opportunities to learn about managing their own well-being, including providing sign-posts to wellbeing service options for carers.
- 3.4 Cygnet will ensure sites have knowledge and information on the range of community support services available and information on how to improve life outside of caring.
- 3.5 Cygnet will ensure sites have guidance and information on how carers can access the full range of benefits available to them and raise awareness of their entitlement to support.
- 3.6 Cygnet will ensure staff clearly understand how and when carers can be involved in planning care.
- 3.7 Cygnet will support young carers (under 18) to ensure they are protected from inappropriate caring responsibilities.

- 3.8 Cygnet staff will use existing holistic care skills and apply these to supporting and involving carers, families and friends in care.
- 3.9 Cygnet will ensure staff are supported and able to apply new learning into their practice. They will be able to deliver improvements to care and carers will be involved in sharing lived experiences to support staff learning.

### Carers' Information Checklist





#### 4. **Policy and Practice Protocols for Sharing and Co-Producing Information with Families and Carers**

Carers hold valuable information and insights which can be of great value in planning treatment and care. Therefore, not involving carers and families can have serious practical and personal consequences for both the carer and the cared-for person. It is also vital that the carer is included in any important meetings and discussions.

Carers need to be given sufficient clear information to help them provide more effective care - offering information to carers about care, support plans, and medication and giving them advice about 'what to do in a crisis'. It is important to note that this provision of general care information does not amount to breaking confidentiality.

To support this, we will:

- 4.1 Staff will complete the Carers' Passports with carers if the carer agrees.
- 4.2 We will ensure staff engage with families / those who are caring and who have the consent to do so from the service user.
- 4.3 Create an accessible opportunity for carers to either feed in remotely, access MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team) meetings or take into account their views before MDT meetings, best interest meetings and annual reviews.
- 4.4 Improve communication around discharge to ensure the service user and the carer have all the information they need before leaving the hospital.
- 4.5 Develop a protocol for when a service user doesn't consent to share information so ensuring that carers are still identified and offered support.
- 4.6 Cygnet will proactively promote planning for the future and advanced statements with carers and people who use Cygnet services.
- 4.7 Cygnet will proactively promote Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPA), and awareness of Deputyship for personal welfare and/or personal, financial affairs.
- 4.8 Cygnet will ensure staff keep up-to-date with information governance training.
- 4.9 Cygnet will involve carers to provide their perspective on policies and protocols.

#### 5. **Supporting Family and Carers**

Clear communication is key to making sure that carers receive the support they need when they need it.

Carers need timely and accurate information about what support is available and who to contact. They also need to be able to have open and frank conversations about confidentiality and information sharing.

To support this, we will:

- 5.1 Develop a corporate Carers' Welcome Pack and ensure that information leaflets for carers are readily available, regularly updated and promoted.
- 5.2 Record family and carers' views on the person who uses Cygnet service care plan.
- 5.3 Strengthen regional Carers' Networks, which will feed into a National Carers' Network.



- 5.4 Create information that could be used by carer leads and ensure all sites have a carers' lead.
- 5.5 Cygnet will invite carers to support and help lead improvement projects through co-design and co-production in their capacity as an expert with lived experience.

## 6. **Improving the Involvement of Families and Carers**

Many carers need professionals to have an awareness of and be sensitive to their needs as carers.

We should give due prominence to the realities of life as a carer or family member of someone with mental illness, learning disabilities or autism. These experiences can be challenging and include the continuing and ongoing stress and worry associated with their caring responsibilities.

To support this, we will:

- 6.1 Work with all locations to develop consistent carers' events (e.g. coffee mornings and opportunities to share experiences) to occur at least every 12 weeks.
- 6.2 We will respect carers and families views and knowledge of their loved ones.
- 6.3 Implement a formal requirement to include carers in the assessment process, Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) review meetings and discharge planning, Best Interest Meetings and annual reviews.
- 6.2 Cygnet will work with carers to work with staff to identify opportunities and challenges and apply creative and innovative thinking in developing solutions.

## **Legal Responsibilities**

Under the Care Act 2014, carers are entitled to a statutory assessment where they appear to have needs; this matches the rights to an assessment of the person being cared for. Local authorities are responsible for carer assessments (or agreed by the Local Authority when delegated).

Staff will also have access to a range of information on the support that carers can receive via local authorities, voluntary and community organisations and universal services in the community.

## **The Opportunity for Cygnet to be a Leader in Carer Support**

Whilst this plan outlines work to be undertaken over the next two years, this does not mean that Cygnet has not already taken strides to ensure carers' needs are focused on at the time of writing this plan. Carer identification and inclusion have been the main aim of our services so far. However, several areas require developing in relation to truly embedding a collaborative approach. Cygnet will

develop this in a truly collaborative manner in co-production with family, carers, friends, individuals who use our services and professionals.

The reason why this strategy is only set for two years, is because Cygnet firmly believes that the contribution of families, carers and experts by experiences through 2023 – 2025 will develop this further through consultation with several stakeholders, including families and carers.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who provided their time, expertise and experiences towards the co-production of this plan, including:

- Cygnet Carers Network
- Cygnet staff
- The Carers Trust
- Karen Ibrahim
- Kate Mercer Black Belt Advocacy

Without their participation in shaping Cygnet's Carer, Family & Friend Strategy, our plans for the future could not be developed with such valuable insight.

## References

Carers Trust. The Triangle of Care Toolkit – A Resource for Mental Health Service Providers; 2015. <https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/53-the-triangle-of-care-carers-included-a-guide-to-best-practice-in-mental-health-care-in-england>

A lasting power of attorney (LPA) is a legal document that lets you (the 'donor') appoint one or more people (known as 'attorneys') to help you make decisions or to make decisions on your behalf. <https://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney>

The Care Act 2014 relates mostly to adult carers – people over 18 who are caring for another adult. This is because young carers (aged under 18) and adults who care for disabled children can be assessed and supported under children's law. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets/care-act-factsheets>

Carer assessment

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/10/enacted>

## *Get in touch*

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## *Connect with us*

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