

# Mental health of adults in contact with the criminal justice system

Information for the public

Published: 21 March 2017

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

## Mental health support for people in contact with the criminal justice system

This information is for anyone 18 and over who has had some contact with the criminal justice system and may have mental health problems. It is also for their family and friends. Contact with the criminal justice system means things like getting arrested or being held in custody, or being on parole or probation.

The information below explains where to find help and advice if you have been assessed as having mental health problems. It also includes some questions you could ask to make sure you get all the support you need.

Separate health advice has been written for [people in prison](#) and their families and carers. If you or someone you care for is going into prison you may want to read this, or ask health staff for a copy.

# Checking if you have mental health problems

If you are arrested, held in custody or on parole or probation, and staff think you may have mental health problems, they should arrange for you to have an assessment. This means a health worker will ask you some questions about your mental health.

## What happens to your personal information?

Staff should always give you a copy of any information they take about your health. They should explain who else might need to see it. They should check whether it is OK before showing it to other health workers or your family or carers. If staff are worried that you could hurt yourself or someone else because of your mental health problems they are allowed to share the information without your permission.

## Questions you could ask

If you or someone you care for may have mental health problems and has had contact with the criminal justice system, here are some questions to help get the right information and support.

**For people going into prison:** please see [healthcare in prison: what to expect](#).

**For people going into hospital** because of a mental health problem please see [moving between hospital and home when you have a mental health problem](#). These are both on the NICE website.

- I (or my relative/friend) got in trouble with the law and have been assessed as having a mental health problem – what happens now?
- Who do I speak to if I'm worried or need help?
- What kind of treatment and care will I have?
- Will I need to take any medicines?

- Can I keep taking any medicines I'm taking already?
- Will I be able to see a doctor or nurse while in police or court custody?
- Will I have to go into hospital because of my mental health problem?
- Is there support to help quit smoking or drinking?

## For friends, family or carers

- How can we get help for a person who cannot make decisions for themselves?
- As a relative/friend or carer, how can I help the person best?
- Is there any specific help available for friends, relatives or carers of people who have been arrested or held in custody?
- My relative or friend has other health problems too – how can I make sure they get all the help they need?
- Where can we get advice about financial support or benefits?
- I'm worried about how the person may act when they come home – what can I do?
- Who should I talk to if the person I care for starts to feel or act unwell?
- Where can we get ongoing support in our local area?

## Where can I find out more?

### Mental health support

- Carers Trust, 0844 800 4361  
[www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)
- MIND, 0300 123 3393  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- Rethink Mental Illness, 0300 500 0927  
[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

- Samaritans, 116 123  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- SANE, 0300 304 7000  
[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)
- Young Minds, 0808 802 5544 (parent helpline)  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

**If your relative or friend is going to prison**

- Nacro, 0300 123 1999  
[www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk)
- Prison Reform Trust, 0808 802 0060  
[www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)
- Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust, 020 3752 5560  
[www.rapt.org.uk](http://www.rapt.org.uk)
- Women in Prison, 0207 359 6674  
[www.womeninprison.org.uk](http://www.womeninprison.org.uk)

You can also go to [NHS Choices](#) for more information on mental health.

NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

NICE has also produced information about:

- [Healthcare in prison](#)
- [Moving between hospital and home when you have a mental health problem](#)
- [Managing violence and aggression in mental health, health and community settings](#)
- [Service user experience in adult mental health services](#)

There is information about how people should be involved in their care on our [website](#).

# What are NICE guidelines?

NICE gives advice to staff working in health and social care. Our guidelines help them to give the best care to people with different conditions and needs. We wrote this guideline with people who have had contact with the criminal justice system, their families and carers, and staff who support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available. You can read the [guideline](#) written for people who work in health and care services.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-2382-3

## Accreditation

