

# Glossary

## A

**Advocates** are people who represent your views and help you to make informed decisions.

**Agoraphobia** is an extreme anxiety and fear about leaving your home or being in open or public spaces.

**Alzheimer's disease** is a condition causing loss of memory, intellectual decline, and can cause changes in personality and behaviour.

**Anorexia nervosa** is an illness involving an intense fear of being overweight, people with the condition under-eat and experience excessive weight loss.

**Antidepressants** are drugs used to treat depression and anxiety.

**Antipsychotics** are drugs used for the treatment of psychosis.

**Approved social worker (ASW)** is a social worker who has undertaken further professional training in mental health and been approved by a local authority to undertake duties under the Mental Health Act. ASWs help to assess whether or not someone should be detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act.

**Auditory hallucination** means hearing a voice or sound that is not there.

## B

**Bipolar disorder** is sometimes referred to as manic depression. It is a disorder in which a person can experience periods of intense depression and then periods of intense elation or hypomania.

**Borderline personality disorder (BPD)** is a disorder of relating to others and yourself. Persons diagnosed with borderline personality disorder often have unstable moods, low self-image, problems with interpersonal relationships, and may display impulsive and/or self-harming behaviour. People with BPD often experience depression, anxiety and a fear of being abandoned.

**Bulimia** is an eating disorder characterised by binge-eating, vomiting or excessive use of laxatives.

## C

**Claustrophobia** is an intense fear of being in an enclosed space.

**Cognitive therapy** is short-term focused psychotherapy that focuses on how you think and behave.

**Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)** supports people with mental health problems in the community. CMHT members include community psychiatric nurses (CPNs), social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, psychiatrists and support workers.

**Community psychiatric nurse (CPN)** is a nurse who specialises in mental health and is specially trained to assess and treat people experiencing mental health problems.

**CPA** or Care Programme Approach - see chapter 3.

## D

**Delusion** is an abnormal belief held about one's self or the world.

**Dementia** is a condition that results in a gradual loss of brain function.

**Depression** is one of the most common mental health problems. The main symptoms are feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, inability to cope, sleep problems, loss of appetite, concentration and energy.

## H

**Hypomania** is a state of high mood that is not quite so severe as mania.

## M

**Mania** is characterised by person feeling over-excited, elated, physically overactive and rapidly changing their ideas.

**Manic depression** (see bipolar disorder)

## N

**Nearest relative** is strictly defined using rules set out in the Mental Health Act and is not always the same as the 'next of kin'. Under the Act the 'nearest relative' has some rights and powers in relation to detention, discharge and the right to be consulted when certain applications are being made.

**Neuroses** is a mental illness resulting in high levels of anxiety, unreasonable fears and behaviour and, often, a need to repeat actions.

## O

**Obsessive compulsive disorder** is a condition where people experience an overwhelming need to follow certain behaviour rituals or repetitive actions.

**Occupational therapist** is a professional whose job is to help people with mental health problems gain confidence and develop everyday skills.

## P

**Panic attack** is an intense and sudden feeling of fear and anxiety.

**Parasuicide** also called deliberate self-harm. It is a term used when someone self harms, but does not kill themselves.

**Personality disorder** describes someone who has severe disturbances of their character and behaviour.

**Phobia** is an irrational and intense fear of a particular object, situation or creature.

**Postnatal depression** is a mental illness that occurs within the weeks or months after childbirth.

**Psychiatrist** is a doctor who specialises in mental health problems and is trained to deal with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

**Psychosis** describes a group of conditions that affect the mind that in part results in a loss of contact with reality. People may experience hallucinations and delusions.

## R

**Responsible medical officer** is the allocated medical professional usually a consultant psychiatrist who under the Mental Health Act has overall responsibility for the patient's treatment.

## S

**Schizo-affective disorder** is often confused with schizophrenia or manic depression as symptoms, although milder, are similar. Many people only ever have one episode, whilst others will experience symptoms at regular intervals throughout their lives.

**Schizophrenia** is a mental illness. The main symptoms are hallucinations (hearing voices), delusions (a firm belief in something that isn't true) and changes in outlook and personality.

**Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)** is a form of depression or mood disorder with a seasonal pattern. It is most common in the winter months.

**Sectioning** is the term used for placing a patient in hospital compulsorily under the Mental Health Act - see chapter 6.

**Substance misuse** is a term that refers to the harmful use of any substance, such as alcohol or drugs.