

## Nearest Relative

The Nearest Relative is a term defined under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act (2003), and the Act lists who the nearest relative is for a patient under Part 17 (254).

It is important to be aware that the nearest relative and the patient's 'next of kin' can be two different people. The next of kin is usually a relative or close friend chosen by someone soon after they are admitted to any sort of hospital, and the next of kin has no legal powers under the Act.

The nearest relative can have several rights under the Mental Health Act. These include:

- Right to information
- Right to consultation
- Right to ask for assessment
- Right to apply for admission
- Right to be involved at discharge
- Right to contact the Independent Mental Health Advocacy Service

The nearest relative can have a right to be told about:

- Renewal of a patient's detention
- Extension of a Compulsory Treatment Order
- Transfer from one hospital to another

Under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act (2015), the nearest relative has some listed rights if the patient does not have a Named Person. This includes a right to initiate applications or appeals to the Tribunal if a patient does not have the capacity to do so themselves.

## 4. Different Types of Carers in Law

### Primary Carer

The primary carer is the person who provides most of the care and support to the patient. If a patient has more than one carer they must decide who the primary carer is, as there can only be one identified primary carer under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act (2003). Under the Act the primary carer has certain rights, such as the right to be notified by hospital management when a patient they support is going to be transferred to another hospital under the Act. Unless this transfer is urgent (in which case they should be notified as soon as possible after the transfer), they also have the right to be informed at least seven days beforehand. The Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015 gives the primary carer rights to initiate applications or appeals to a Mental Health Tribunal if a patient does not have the capacity to do so themselves, and does not have a Named Person.

### Listed Initiator

The Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015 introduces a limited right, when the patient has no Named Person, for a 'listed initiator' (primary carer, nearest relative, guardian or welfare attorney) to apply or appeal to the Mental Health Tribunal if the patient does not have capacity to do so on their own behalf. The patient's primary carer and nearest relative cannot act as a listed initiator if the patient has made a written declaration precluding them from doing so. The patient needs to be capable of making such a declaration, and this needs to be witnessed.

## Named Person

A Named Person can help to protect an individual's interests if they have to be given care or treatment. Anyone aged 16 or over can choose their own Named Person so long as a witness can certify that they understand the effect of choosing a Named Person, and they have not been under any undue influence. The Named Person is not necessarily the primary carer or nearest relative and has to be informed and consulted about aspects of the individual's care.

The Named Person has the right:

- To be consulted when certain actions are taken or considered—such as when a short-term detention or an application for a compulsory treatment order (CTO) is being considered
- To be notified when certain changes to the individual's circumstances happen – for example, if their short-term detention is revoked
- To receive copies of certain records or information that is given to the individual. The Named Person (or nearest relative and primary carer with the patient's permission) should receive a copy of anything given in writing to the patient, including the record made if treatment has been given which conflicts with a patient's Advance Statement (if one has been made)
- To make applications or appeals to the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland (the Tribunal), and to speak and give or lead evidence at a hearing
- To consent to two medical examinations taking place at the same time, if the individual is not capable of giving their consent to this (where two medical examinations are needed when an application has been made for a compulsory treatment order)
- To ask for an assessment of the individual's needs from the Local Authority and/or Health Board

Anyone can be a Named Person if he or she:

- is aged 16 or over
- knows what is involved, and has agreed to act as the individual's Named Person
- The nomination has to be agreed in writing, and signed and witnessed properly

Under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015, a Named Person is no longer assigned by default, meaning that an adult patient will only have a Named Person if they choose to have one (this does not apply to patients under the age of 16).

The Named Person should not be someone who has any responsibility for providing the individual's care, for example their GP, responsible medical officer, mental health officer or community psychiatric nurse. This is because the Named Person must be able to make decisions independently about what he or she thinks is in the individuals best interest, and this might be in conflict with what the care team think.

There have been difficulties with both patients and named persons being upset by the confidential material that has been sent to the named person by the Tribunal. Legally this is correct practice, but patients have complained that they did not realise their Named Person would be sent information - for example, about an index offence - and named persons have been very distressed to read this. It is important that a patient is supported to understand the role of a Named Person, and that the Named Person understands the responsibilities of the position.

The Named Person is entitled to free legal advice and representation at Mental Health Tribunals.