

## Mental Health Carers Service Information & Advice Sheets

### Schizophrenia

In people experiencing an episode of schizophrenia, the mental processes of thinking become distorted, making it hard for them to distinguish what is imagined from what is real. When severe, this can lead to immense panic, anger, depression, elation or over-activity, perhaps punctuated by periods of withdrawal.

The symptoms of schizophrenia are divided into two groups, called 'positive' [for example, hallucinations and delusions] and 'negative' [for example, slowness to move, think, speak or react]. These may occur separately, together or alternately. It is a relatively common condition, with approximately one in one hundred people worldwide experiencing an episode of schizophrenia at some time during their lives, although highest incidence is in the late teens and early twenties. In about one quarter of cases there is eventually a full recovery. The majority continue to have problems, but usually they also have long periods of good functioning.

### Treatment

Effective treatment involves a number of different approaches. It is most effective when begun in the early stages of the illness. Some form of medication is essential for most people; however, this should be given in combination with education about the disorder, emotional support and help with learning how to manage any continuing symptoms.