

A quick guide for substance misuse carers, relatives and friends



**Information for people living
in Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot
and Swansea**



Who is a carer?

A carer is someone of any age who provides or intends to provide care for family or friends who could not manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.

Anyone can become a carer; carers come from all walks of life, all cultures and can be of any age. Many feel they are doing what anyone else would in the same situation; looking after their mother, son, or best friend.

Carers don't choose to become carers: it just happens and they have to get on with it; if they didn't do it, who would and what would happen to the person they care for?



Whether you have been caring for someone for a long time or the substance misuse issue is relatively new, more than likely you will have a lot of questions:

- **How do I know if they are using drugs?**
- **Why do they use drugs/alcohol?**
- **Is it my fault?**
- **How can I cope with their behaviour?**
- **What can I do to help?**
- **Where do I get the help I need?**



Top tips – a quick guide to getting support and helping yourself

Don't be silent

Substance misuse can be much stigmatised and by association, those who care for users may feel they will be stigmatised too. Carers often describe feelings of shame and isolation.

However, by not talking about your feelings and experiences in relation to caring for a user you may be adversely affecting your own emotional and mental wellbeing.



Contact your local Carers Centre

Bridgend
T: 01656 658479

Neath Port Talbot
T: 01639 642277

Swansea
T: 01792 653344

They will be able to offer a range of services as well as help you access additional support within your community.

To get a carer's assessment contact your local authority:

Carer's assessment

As a carer you are entitled to a carer's assessment. It is not a test of your ability to care, but gives you a chance to talk about yourself and what you need to fulfill your caring role.

Carers should be offered an assessment on their own, though sometimes the person you care for may be present if that is what the carer prefers. Sometimes the assessment forms can be left with the carer to complete in their own time and then discussed and agreed with the Care Manager at a convenient time.

The person doing the assessment will ask questions about the things you have to do and how he or she copes with them. Your age and general health should be taken into account, as should the level of support you already receive. An assessment should provide you with information on help that may be available. Remember, that the help may be delivered to the person being cared for, but hopefully this will be of benefit to you too.

When the assessment has been completed and your needs have been identified, Social Services should provide a written copy of the results of the assessment and details of how your needs are to be met.

You will benefit from getting advice and support to help you continue your caring role including help to get a break, meeting other carers, help for the person you care for and training and resources which may help you.

To get a carer's assessment contact:

Bridgend County Borough Council
T: 01656 642279

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
T: 01639 686802

City and County of Swansea
T: 01792 636000





What next?

Contact local specialist substance misuse agencies to gain information on coping skills and how to set boundaries (e.g. WCADA and/or Drugaid Cymru)

These are crucial for substance misuse carers, as conflict in families where there is substance use is common. Disagreements frequently arise in families where there is substance use, as the user wants different things, e.g. a substance user may want to spend household money on drugs or alcohol which other family members may need for food, rent or bills.

Families cope as best they can with what they know. However, often entrenched patterns of conflict develop which are stressful, upsetting and frustrating.

Getting financial support

Whilst a carer can access a range of benefits, the primary benefit that you would be entitled to is the Carers Allowance. It is essential to get the financial help you are entitled to. However, the system is extremely complex and forever changing.

Contact the Citizens Advice Bureau: Bridgend - 01656 654951, Swansea/Neath Port Talbot - 01792 474882 for the latest information or visit www.dwp.gov.uk/gov as there are a number of conditions that need to be met.

You can also call the Benefit Enquiry Helpline on 0800 88 22 00.

Useful contacts:

Celtic Court Health and Wellbeing Centre

(Bridgend WCADA and ABMU Health Board Community Drug and Alcohol Team)

T: 01656 667717

DASH Bridgend

(advice and support for people affected by substance misuse)

T: 01656 650686

Drugaid Cymru (Swansea)

T: 01792 472002

WCADA (Wales Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction)

Bridgend – T: 01656 667717 • Neath – T: 01639 633630

Port Talbot – T: 01639 890863 • Swansea – T: 01792 472519

Useful websites:

www.al-anonuk.org.uk

(support for anyone whose life has been affected by someone's drinking)

www.bridgendcarers.co.uk

www.carerswales.org (carers' information)

www.citizensadvice.org.uk (benefits advice)

www.dan247.org.uk

(point of contact for anyone in Wales wanting further information or help relating to drugs and/or alcohol misuse)

www.drugaidcymru.com

www.gov.uk/dwp (benefits advice)

www.hafal.org

www.mhmbcb.com (directories of services)

www.nptcarers.org.uk

www.swanseacarerscentre.org.uk

www.talktofrank.com (confidential drugs misuse advice)

www.wcada.org (support and advice on drug and/or alcohol misuse)





**If you have any queries or concerns about substance misuse services, please contact the Western Bay APB support team,
T: 01639 763193**

Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations

Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Sir Penybont

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