

Carer leaflet

We have written this document to provide information to those who are caring for a veteran accessing psychological treatment through Veterans' NHS Wales. Due to your relationship with the veteran in your life, you may not consider yourself a carer. However, carer has a broad definition which may encompass your relationship. We consider carers anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, mental health problem or addiction.

Support for yourself

If you support someone who is struggling because of their physical or mental ill health, learning disability or drug or alcohol problem, you may have found that your own life has been affected. For example, your free time, work and relationships may have changed. You may also be struggling to manage any practical or financial changes. It is common for carers to neglect their own needs. To maintain your own wellbeing, but also to be able to best support the veteran in your life, it is important to look after yourself.

Carers Wales is an organisation which supports carers in Wales and their website provides a wealth of information about support which may be available to you -

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales>

They also have a confidential helpline for carers which is open Monday-Friday 9am-6pm

0808 808 7777

You can also access a free carer's assessment through your local authority. Through this assessment, you will speak privately with someone about your caring responsibilities and how they are affecting you. You may be directed to access support from specialist organisations or be put in touch with groups that understand your caring role. This may include financial, practical and/or emotional support.

If you are interested in finding out more, please follow the relevant link based on where you live:

Cardiff

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Social-Services-and-Wellbeing/Carers/Carers-assessment/Pages/default.aspx>

Vale of Glamorgan

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/social_care/adult_services/Carers/Careers-Assessment.aspx

Discussing a veteran's care with you

It is important to know that we won't be able to discuss details of a veteran's care (e.g. appointment dates & times, their management plan) unless we have explicit consent from the veteran that they are happy for such information to be shared. Therefore, if you think it's important to be kept informed, it would be helpful to discuss this with the veteran in your life and ask them to give their consent for this sharing of information.

Confidentiality

We think it is helpful for those who are supporting veterans to understand our policy regarding confidentiality. Veterans' NHS Wales is delivered by a team of professionals and so it may be necessary for other members of the team, other than the therapist working with the veteran, to have access to information about their care. There are also some circumstances where we in the public interest may be required to disclose information to other agencies that would otherwise be kept confidential. Examples of this include where someone is at risk or is a risk to others, or where there is evidence of serious criminal activity.

Crisis

We are not a crisis service and so if you or the veteran in your life needs immediate support for their mental health or wellbeing, we would advise you to visit your GP, local A&E department and/or call one of the 24/7 support lines listed below:

Community Advice and Listening Line (CALL)

0800 132737

The CALL helpline is a confidential service which provides emotional support and information/literature on Mental Health. It can be accessed by anyone is concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend.

The Samaritans

116 123 (English)

0808 164 0123 (Welsh)

The Samaritans helpline offers a free, safe place for you to talk 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. The helpline is non-judgemental and the volunteers will not tell you what to do, they will just listen.

Supporting veterans to engage with treatment

It can be scary to engage with therapy, for example, opening up to someone about your mental health problems or describing painful past experiences can be difficult. However, much can be gained through therapy and we are committed to adapting therapy to suit everyone. Therefore, it is important that veterans continue to engage with therapy.

There are a number of things that you can do to support a veteran to continually engage with our service. For example, if they would find it helpful and give their consent, you are welcome to join assessment and therapy appointments. They may also be reassured if you could help them with getting to appointments or waiting for them whilst they have their appointment. We recommend veterans do not drive home on their own and if possible, someone helps them get home. The Combat Stress guide described below also provides valuable information on how to specifically support veterans who are experiencing common mental health symptoms. If you have any particular concerns or would like to find out more on how you can support the veteran in your life, you are welcome to contact us via the email detailed below.

Support for veterans' medication

If the veteran you are supporting has concerns or questions about medications they are currently taking or are prescribed, there is a specialist helpline in Cardiff & Vale to access information from a pharmacy professional. More information is available through this website <https://www.wmic.wales.nhs.uk/> and the helpline (029 2184 2251) is available Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm and Saturday & Sunday 9am-12.45pm.

Other relevant organisations and sources of information

Organisations which support adults

Combat Stress – Have written a guide for family members/carers to work through, which covers symptoms of common mental health conditions experienced by Veterans, how to support veterans with these symptoms and how to look after yourself. We recommend that you take the time to work through the guide linked here - <https://selfhelp.combatstress.org.uk/family/page1.php>

The Ripple Pond – peer support service which connects family members with a network of Forces families - <https://theripplepond.org/>

Woody's lodge – Woody's lodge offer veterans of the armed forces and their loved one's expert advice and guidance on a range of topics from housing & benefits to socialising with like-minded peers - <https://www.woodyslodge.org/>

Organisations which support children

Children who are close to veterans experiencing mental health difficulties may also need support. Some relevant organisations are listed below:

Childline – 0800 1111

Young Minds – 0808 802 554 (for parents who are concerned about their child)

TGP Cymru – offers support to veterans and their families to support their mental health. If you are interested in engaging with this service, Veterans' NHS Wales is able to refer to this organisation, so please let us know.

Contact us with any queries

Please get in touch if you have any questions at all or would like more information.

Email – admin.vnhsqc&v@wales.nhs.uk

Telephone – 029 2183 2261