

What Can We Do?

Carers Leeds Drug and Alcohol team work on a number of principles, including:

- We acknowledge that we cannot stop someone from using drugs and/or alcohol
- However, we can change the way we respond to our friend/family member's substance use
- We can change our coping strategies
- We can put in boundaries to protect ourselves
- We can focus on our own wellbeing and recovery even if our friend/family member continues using drugs and/or alcohol

Through one-to-one sessions and group support, we can explore different coping strategies, look at how to set effective boundaries and how to maintain our own wellbeing. We can also offer a safe and supportive environment to discuss thoughts, feelings and emotions, without worrying about stigma or shame.

It's not me using drugs/alcohol, why do I need to access support?

Many people we work with feel a level of resentment or anger that they have to get support, even though it may not be their behaviours which are causing the problems. While we know that we cannot control someone else's behaviours, we can control how those behaviours impact on us. Accessing support can help you cope better with the impact of someone else's difficult behaviours and help set boundaries of what you expect from the other person. We also know that changing your behaviour may support the person using substances to make positive changes themselves.

Carers Leeds, 6/8 The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 6PT

Carers Advice Line—0113 380 4300

(9am—4.30pm Mon-Fri. 9am-6.30pm Wed)

Carers Leeds is a Limited Company Registered No. 3242065; Registered Charity No. 1058706



Drug & Alcohol Team

Introduction Booklet

carers advice line
0113 380 4300

 /carersleeds  @carersleeds

www.carersleeds.org.uk

Introduction

This booklet has been written to support people impacted by someone else's substance use. We refer to these people as Concerned Others. Concerned Other is a term frequently used in the addiction field and can be a husband, wife, partner, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, friend or other family member of someone using substances. When we talk about substance use, this could be drug use or alcohol use.

We know that Concerned Others face a number of challenges and they often need support for themselves, as well as trying to support the person using substances.

We hope to provide information to support the Concerned Other to make changes to improve their wellbeing. We also know that often, but not always, changes made by the Concerned Other can lead to positive changes in the substance user.

Who Are We?

Carers Leeds works with unpaid carers supporting someone with an illness, disability, mental health issue or substance use issue.

When we talk about someone with a substance use issue, we are thinking about someone with a problematic relationship with drug and/or alcohol. This could be someone actively using or someone who has had difficulties in the past. We recognise that although someone may have stopped using, the challenges do not suddenly disappear. We also know that not everyone who is using substances sees their use as a problem or wants to seek help. The substance user does not need to be seeking help for us to support you.

Carers Leeds does not work directly with the person using substances. Forward Leeds is the drug and alcohol service for Leeds and they can be contacted on 0113 8872477.

What Support Do We Offer?

Carers Leeds offers information, advice and guidance on how to manage the impact of someone else's substance use. This could be a one-off phone call or face-to-face session to resolve a specific query, or could involve up to six sessions of structured support.

We also hold regular support groups, offering Concerned Others an opportunity to share their experiences with others who can relate to their situation in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. Please contact the office for information on upcoming groups and how to access them. Information sessions and workshops are organised on an ad hoc basis, depending on need.

We know that having a friend/family member who uses substances is highly stressful and can have a negative impact on your health. Some of the common challenges that people talk about are:

- Poor sleep
- Constant worry / anxiety
- Feelings of guilt and responsibility
- Feelings of shame
- Financial impact
- Anger and frustration
- Isolation
- Impact on work *and much more*

Concerned Others often neglect their own health and wellbeing in favour of the person using substances. This can be draining, leading to people becoming physically and mentally exhausted. Carers Leeds hopes to be able to support you to manage these feelings and experiences.