



Blackburn with Darwen  
**carers service**

## Drugs and Self Harming

### The Carers Service assessment identified:

- Alison\* had been referred to the carers service by YSYC, after advising them that she believed her situation has reached a crisis point. Her 18 year old son was using a large amount of cannabis each day, was self-harming, isolating himself, exhibiting symptoms of paranoia and displaying violent behaviour. In addition to this her partner was an alcoholic. Alison had severe anxiety herself and was struggling to know what to do for the best or how to cope at home
- Neither Alison's son nor partner wanted to receive help from substance misuse services, and although her son was frequently taken to the hospital for self-harming, he'd discharge himself without treatment and return home. He was referred to mental health services but would refuse to show up for any appointments made for him. This left Alison feeling as though her life was a revolving door.

### Co-ordinated support offered:

- Alison was given the opportunity to talk about how she was feeling about the situation 1-1 with the Drug and Alcohol Carers Advisor  
She was encouraged to, and started to attend the weekly CASH group (Care, Advice, Support, Help) where she met other people affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use. It was a big step for Alison\* to find the confidence to face her anxiety and attend the group for the first time, but found the group enormously beneficial. Alison realised she wasn't the only one who was living with someone who wasn't willing to change, and took comfort in the fact that she wasn't alone in her frustrations
- Even though those around her weren't ready to change their behaviour, the support helped Alison realise that she had the power to change herself. She started to realise that there were things she could do to improve her life
- Alison learned more about what services are available for her son and partner when they were ready to address their addictions, so she'd know how to advise and support them
- Alison started to do more for herself, and started to attend activities with the carers service to increase her confidence. She also accessed support via the Women's Centre and through the Community Well-being Service
- Alison signed up for the 5 session 'Families Understanding Addiction' course (developed by the Carers Service and Evolve) where she learned about putting boundaries in place at home, and also to recognise the difference between 'doing' and 'enabling'. Alison's knowledge of addiction and recovery greatly increased as a result
- Alison took part in the 'Understanding Self-harm' workshop with Lancashire Mind, and also visited Littledale Hall Rehabilitation Facility with the Carers Service. She also heard from guest speakers in recovery who told their stories. All these served to increase her knowledge of how to support her partner and son
- Alison also accessed the Carers Respite Grants to have her first holiday for over 10 years. She found it incredibly beneficial to

get away from the home environment and have time away to enjoy herself.

### Outcomes for carer:

- Alison's anxiety has greatly reduced. She has more confidence and is able to cope with her situation in a much more proactive way. She feels that she is no longer overwhelmed by her situation and is clearer about how to manage her own well-being. She continues to attend the weekly CASH group to give and receive support
- Alison's partner has started to receive support to reduce his alcohol use and her son has finally acknowledged that he needs help, and has taken the first steps towards this. It is early days but she now has higher hopes of a positive outcome for both of them individually and the family as a whole
- Alison has found the service enormously beneficial and has learned a lot about treatment and recovery. She feels that she's in a much better place to support herself, her son and her partner.

### What could the long term savings be because of this support:

- By helping Alison to identify 'positive' coping mechanisms, Alison putting them into practice and having a strong support network has overwhelming helped to reduce her anxiety levels, and provided her with much more control over her own well-being. This support very probably will have prevented the potential need for future mental health services and possibly even crisis team input
- As Alison's loved ones are now accessing treatment and taking the first step towards recovery, they will be mitigating the damage done to their bodies through their substance misuse, and also the damage done to the family as a whole
- Through a holistic approach by the carers service and co-ordinated support with other specialist services, Alison now has a vast amount of support and information she needed has potentially gone a long way in helping to reduce further impact upon the family which may have resulted in major impact on other services: housing, if the family separated; increased benefits; health and social services.

\*Name changed

[www.bwdcarers.org.uk](http://www.bwdcarers.org.uk)