



'Can Do' for Veterans

Alternate case stories for *'Can Do' for Young People Families and Carers*

**Unit three: Families and Carers –
how can we support and include them?**

Unit three - Gillian: Mother of a young veteran

Case story

Every day I've got these bad headaches. I wake up with them and they're the worst I've ever had. Even the Panadeine Forte doesn't lift them and I know I'm taking too many. But I've got to get to work. I bring the money in.

Since my son Callum has come to live with us, there's a lot of strain. I don't know what to do. He was hardly back from Iraq and he was knocking on the door. I don't know the details of his discharge. Why it happened or whether it was medical. He won't open up. He's only just out of his teens really but now his behaviour's got that hard grown up 'macho' edge to it. He's a different person. Totally. He's so edgy all the time and you say boo and he can get into these rages. It scares me. He's taking pills. He says they're prescribed but he's not seeing any doctors. And I know he's having nightmares because I'm not sleeping myself and I hear him in his room.

I never thought I'd say this but I'm thinking of telling him he has to find his own place. If it was just me, okay. But there's his sister. She's fifteen and I've got to think about her. She's hard to manage and I know she's drinking – she thinks she's twenty-one already. I was just starting to get through to her but now that Callum is coming in and laying down the law...? . He's pushing and pushing and she won't take it.

They both need me but which one do I choose?

Points for discussion

1. What are the important issues here for Gillian?
2. If Gillian were talking to you in your service, how would you engage with her?
3. What are the risks and what assessments might you make?
4. What interventions might be useful?
5. Would you involve her family including Callum?
6. How can Veteran and Veterans Families Services (VVCS) help?
7. What other support could local health and community services offer to Gillian at this point and how would you access them?

Unit three: Facilitator's notes

Story Vignette – feedback session

- The points for discussion are to trigger group discussion.
- Use the whiteboard to write up main ideas.
- The facilitator's notes below are to direct discussion and prompt further explanation of important issues.
- Ensure only one participant speaks at a time and is heard by the entire group. Be aware of who is speaking and who is not.
- Invite participation from everyone.
- Reflect and if necessary rephrase the participant's comment to link its relevance to the topic.

Be sure to allow the different aspects of care on offer from the various service providers in the room. Encourage them to think about how these fit together. E.g. a youth service may be able to offer a number of services but how would they link up with a GP and put the family into contact with VVCS? Do they know what a GP can offer and how they can refer to specialist mental health services if necessary? Ask a GP participant to explain and to talk about the use of care plans and referral pathways when working with patients with mental health and substance use problems.

Facilitator's trigger questions

- Discuss Gillian's story - what other history would participants want to find out about Gillian?
- Make sure participants focus on Gillian's health and wellbeing rather than being deflected to discuss the son's health issues.
- Discuss issues of confidentiality and of family involvement.
- Family members sometimes feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities to their children – what kind of reassurance and support can participants offer. Refer back to the CRASH mnemonic.
- What practical strategies can participants provide to Gillian to help with her relationships with her children?
- Raise the possibility of domestic violence – is this an issue? If so what duty of care do participants have?
- Do participants know what VVCS has on offer for families of veterans?
- Ask any DVA or VVCS participants to explain what they have to offer.
- Ask participants to list family support services available in their area and refer them to Family Drug Support as a national group that offers telephone support .
- Outline some immediate steps that could be put in place for Gillian and also longer term strategies.