

I think some-one I know may have bipolar disorder

The situation

You have noticed a change in the thoughts and behaviour of some-one close to you. Looking at all the signs and symptoms of bipolar disorder, or 'manic' depression, at least some of them are similar to what is happening to him/her.

What happens now

S/he may not realise that s/he's ill, especially if in a 'manic' phase or having a psychotic episode. S/he may become withdrawn, anxious or paranoid if challenged. However early treatment usually means an earlier recovery so don't delay. Modern treatments are often effective and a diagnosis will not mean that his/her life is over.

Try to get them to see their GP who will check for physical causes and/or make referrals for assessment. You can see the GP yourself, in confidence, to record their symptoms and to get advice on how to cope with their behaviour.

If you think they might self-harm or if they engage in other very risky or threatening behaviour, you may be able to request a home visit from the GP. If there is immediate danger, involving the police will ensure they get into the Mental Health system.

It is important too not to neglect your own health and other needs. Many people find a carers support group helpful - Hafal runs them across the country. It may be reassuring to have contact with other people in the same situation as you.

Actions to take

- Encourage the person concerned to go to the GP or see the GP yourself.
- Show them the version of this fact-sheet aimed at them.
- Get in touch with your local carers support group via the web-site below.

Rights

- A carers assessment from social services if you are providing regular care: this is not linked to your income, savings or property although these may impact on charges for any care services you receive.

Further information

www.hafal.org **01792 816600** – Principle charity providing information and support services for people with severe mental illness and their carers in Wales.
<http://www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk/content/?id=17> – Institute of Psychiatry web-site aimed at the friends, relatives and carers of anyone with a mental illness.

0800 132737 – Wales-wide mental health helpline hosted by the North East Wales NHS Trust (10am-2pm & 7pm-11pm Mon-Fri; noon-midnight Sat & Sun)