

# Setting the

**Lack of clarity about professional standards of practice drove the Federation of Drug and Alcohol Professionals to develop a new DANOS-based professional certification scheme. Simon Shepherd, FDAP's chief executive, describes the run-up to this month's launch.**



**W**hen I first took up my post at FDAP, I spent some time touring the country, asking drug and alcohol workers what were the biggest issues they wanted their professional body to address.

Time and again people told me that the things they found most difficult were keeping up to date with the latest developments in the field, the lack of clarity about professional standards of practice, the absence of any professional certification for drug and alcohol workers, and the lack of recognition which they felt their skills and knowledge attracted within the wider health and social care sector.

To make it easier for practitioners to keep up to date with the latest news and developments, we launched a professional web portal, [www.drinkanddrugs.net](http://www.drinkanddrugs.net), in early 2003, joined at the end of last year by *Drink and Drugs News* magazine.

On professional standards, we last year published a code of practice for workers across the field – addressing a range of issues, from relationships with clients to the so-called, and widely derided, ‘two year-rule’, and backed by a rigorous, and externally validated, set of complaints and disciplinary procedures.

This left us with the two other main areas of concern – the absence of a professional certification scheme for workers, and the related problem of the lack of recognition for the professionalism of drug and alcohol practitioners.

When I joined FDAP we already had an

accreditation scheme for drug and alcohol counsellors, modelled on the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)'s accreditation scheme but recognising the particular skills and knowledge required to work as a counsellor in our field. But while we are very proud of our counsellor accreditation scheme – which last summer was granted UK Register of Counsellors (UKRC) recognition putting it on a par with BACP's generic counsellor qualification – it is only relevant to counsellors, and so of little help to all the other workers out there.

After more than a year in development, we are now ready to launch a professional certification scheme for workers across the field including education and prevention workers, and staff working throughout the drug and alcohol treatment sector.

Our Drug and Alcohol Professional Certification scheme is based around the Drug & Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS), and will complement the Health & Social Care NVQ and DANOS Continuing Professional Development Awards outlined by Trevor Boutall in the last issue of *DDN*.

To become a Certified Drug and Alcohol Professional, practitioners will need to provide evidence of competence in a ‘core’ set of nine DANOS units, plus one from a set of 14 ‘specialist’ units.

Under the scheme, practitioners may be certified as either a Registered or Accredited Drug and Alcohol Professional.

**‘A major step towards professionalism and parity of esteem for drug and alcohol practitioners.’**

Trevor Boutall, DANOS consultant

**‘At last, a route that recognises and rewards the professionalism of drug and alcohol workers.’**

Elizabeth Flegg, HR Manager, Sussex DAATs

**‘A quantum leap to help raise standards that will benefit workforce development & professionalism to support delivery of the drug strategy.’**

Peter Martin, Chief Executive, Addaction

**‘This initiative provides a long needed, competence-based, clinical governance mechanism for the addiction field.’**

Rob Kenyon, Workforce Development & Clinical Governance Advisor (substance misuse), Leeds PCTs

# standards

## Core units

- Relate to, and interact with, individuals [AA2]
- Promote the equality, diversity, rights and responsibilities of individuals [AA4]
- Promote choice, well-being and the protection of all individuals [AA6]
- Reflect on and develop your practice [AC1]
- Make use of supervision [AC2]
- Promote, monitor & maintain health, safety & security in the working environment [BD4]
- Promote effective communication for and about individuals [BI5]
- Assess and act upon immediate risk of danger to substance users [AB5]
- (Either) Carry out assessment to identify and prioritise needs [AF2] (or) Carry out comprehensive substance misuse assessment [AF3]

## Specialist units

- Support individuals who are substance users [AB2]
- Provide services to those affected by someone else's substance use [AB7]

- Raise awareness about substances, their use and effects [AD1]
- Develop and disseminate information and advice about substance use, health and social well-being [AD4]
- Test for substance use [AE1]
- Develop, implement and review care plans for individuals [AG1]
- Prescribe controlled drugs for substance users [AH1]
- Supply and exchange injecting equipment for individuals [AH3]
- Support individuals through detoxification programmes [AH7]
- Supervise methadone consumption [AH9]
- Carry out brief interventions with alcohol users [AH10]
- Prepare prescriptions for controlled drugs [AH11]
- Counsel individuals about their substance use using recognised theoretical models [AI1]
- Counsel groups of individuals about their substance use using recognised theoretical models [AI3]

To be Registered as a Drug and Alcohol Professional practitioners will, as a minimum, need their employers to attest to their competence in each of the nine 'core' units and their one additional 'specialist' unit. To be accredited as a Drug and Alcohol Professional practitioners will need to have their competence in each of the units demonstrated by a 'recognised' competence-based qualification.

The scheme is quality assured by an independent Professional Certification Advisory Panel (PCAP) and by Thames Valley University.

We hope that FDAP's Drug and Alcohol

Professional Certification will help to provide a way of recognising the skills and knowledge of practitioners in the field, and enhancing the esteem in which they are held within the wider health and social field.

We believe that in doing so, it will also make a contribution to addressing one of the other major challenges facing our profession – that of attracting people to and retaining them in the field.

**For more information see under 'Professional Certification' at [www.fdap.org.uk](http://www.fdap.org.uk).**

**'An important step towards helping to develop a highly skilled, effective workforce, which reflects the professionalism and commitment of the sector.'**

Lord Victor Adebawale, Chief Executive, Turning Point

**'This will help improve the professionalism of practitioners and ensure their roles and careers acquire greater credibility and recognition - something Clouds has long worked hard to achieve.'**

Nick Barton, CEO, Clouds

## What's happening on training in Scotland?

DDN asked Joy Barlow, Head of STRADA

Scottish Vocational Qualifications at various levels are the first stage qualification for anyone working in social work and social care.

However for many people working in drug and alcohol services, it would be accepted – though not the necessarily expected – that they would do some of the specialist DANOS units. They would be bolted on to the SVQ level 3 care modules.

DANOS in Scotland is not seen as the passport to practice, but the identity card, telling people where they are, who they are, what they are, and providing information for training and development needs.

At the moment it is not likely to become the case that you will have to be qualified with DANOS units to practise in the drug alcohol field. That's the message at the moment from the Scottish Social Services Council, which has responsibility for qualification and registration of social work and social care in Scotland. That doesn't mean that DANOS is being ignored, and we've still got to meet with Skills for Health to see what exactly is going to happen in Scotland.

As far as training on drugs and alcohol is concerned, Scottish Training on Drugs and Alcohol (STRADA) – a partnership between the University of Glasgow's Centre for Drug Misuse Research (CDMR), The Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) and DrugScope – is the main training agency. We're currently updating and reviewing all 17 of our core modules on the STRADA prospectus in line with DANOS units and providing underpinning knowledge for the units.

We're also doing much more than modular training – bespoke special commission training and two postgraduate certificates – one in addictions and one in business administration for managers of drugs and alcohol services. Also, which may be interesting for people elsewhere in the UK, we're running a leadership programme for the DATs and the ADATs (Scottish DAATs) on partnership working.

In addition to that, we're now beginning to be commissioned to provide training needs analysis, based on DANOS, for a number of different alcohol and drug action teams in Scotland, which is very much building on DANOS.