



## **Dave Mulvaney: The programme looks for a fundamental change in attitude and behaviour... The drug free environment requires commitment to abstinence and participants are breathalysed or swab-tested to make sure they are drug and alcohol free within 48 hours.**

Chris had spent 14 of his 30 years on crack and heroin, reaching such a low point that 'going to prison saved my life'. Forty-six-year-old Charles found himself flung from a stable job and loving family by being introduced to crystal meth.

For each of these people, Island is proving to be the bridge back to their community, and to reality.

'It was OK being in rehab, but it was a cotton wool environment,' says Chris. 'Here the real work takes place... I'm finding out a lot about myself.'

Between the prison CARAT workers and the team at the Island Day Programme clients are being given the support they need to integrate back into society.

Ronnie is an inspiring example of someone coming out the other side. 'I have a job and responsibility. People look up to me at work. I'm about to go on holiday,' he says, as if he can hardly believe it himself. Considering he wanted to die just a short while ago, that's not a bad five months' work. **DDN**

For more information on RAPt's Island Day Programme, call 020 7538 0184 or email [info.island@rapt.org.uk](mailto:info.island@rapt.org.uk).

# Supportive ANSA for nurses

ANSA has supported nurses working in the substance misuse field for the past 23 years. Now, more than ever, the association plays a key role in representing the nurse's voice to decision-makers, as Malcolm Carr explains.

The Association of Nurses in Substance Abuse was formed in 1983 as an interest group for nurses working in drug and alcohol services. Many who work in the field now will have no memory of those dark (and sometimes heady) days as the field of substance abuse (as it was then called) moved care from the Regional DDUs (Drug Dependency Units) to the CDTs (Community Drug Teams) during the last 15 years of the twentieth century. Strange to think now that in those early years of ANSA's existence, many nurses worked in unsupported and isolated situations and, as a single professional organisation, ANSA was often the only support system available.

Reflecting on the last eight years we have seen the introduction of a Drug Czar, long term strategic planning, the development of the NTA and millions of pounds poured into services. None of this was conceivable in 1983. Services developed during the life of ANSA have indeed undergone many changes and have rapidly expanded.

Throughout its existence, ANSA members have discussed, supported and raised concerns about the way services have developed. Recent hot topics have been Nurse Prescribing, which ANSA has broadly supported (with an awareness that it is an area which needs ongoing development, both for individual practitioners within specialities and for the nursing profession as a whole) and the health agenda. For many nurses a real issue continues to be the need to keep the health of service users as high on the agenda as socio-economic issues, particularly in relation to the harms associated with alcohol and drug use. ANSA has always included tobacco in its scope.

One of the coming hot topics will be the role of the nurse and recognition of nurses as specialist practitioners within the field of substance misuse. Nurses are skilled

professionals who have a major contribution to make to the workforce and whether a mental health trained nurse or a general trained nurse, the contribution is a key and important one. As a professional group, nurses may not always have been very articulate at describing their contribution but are key players in the multi-disciplinary team. Because nurses train with a health remit, they are able to interject health needs into care in a different way to generic drug workers and counsellors. Those nurses who move into the substance misuse field, either from a psychiatric or general nurse background, are able to add a unique and disparate knowledge set into their role.

ANSA is a membership organisation; its officers are elected at an annual three-day conference and are unpaid. We welcome members from other disciplines as associate members but only nurse members have full voting rights.

We recognise that nurses no longer work in isolation and indeed ANSA recognises that as an organisation, it cannot stand in isolation – but we are unashamedly a nursing organisation, and will continue to be so. ANSA has over the years given input to the Department of Health, Home Office, NICE, NTA, ACMD, RCGP and many other working parties. In doing so we are able to speak directly to our membership and give them opportunity to feedback their thoughts to the corridors of power.

*The ANSA booklets which cover several different aspects of the nurses role in the field should be available (in PDF) on the ANSA web site which is due to be re-launched in a few weeks at [www.ansa.uk.net](http://www.ansa.uk.net). Watch this space for an announcement.*

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