

Druglink

In the firing line

If you are an unemployed problem drug user, then the government will fall over itself to get you into treatment and is now committed to a programme of reintegration to enable you to become a useful and productive member of society. Substantial investment in treatment and falling waiting times means that services are there with open arms, whether you have committed a trigger offence and tested positive for heroin or cocaine, you are (if the government has its way) in receipt of benefit or just somebody who realises they need help and self-refers.

As our cover story indicates, there is an irony for those who are in work and very useful members of society who then find themselves in fear of their jobs if they come forward for help with a drug problem. And who are these employees? Frontline drugs workers, many of whom may be former users or young and inexperienced people crushed by the weight of what can be a very stressful job. So if any employer should have exemplary pastoral care in these circumstances, it should be drug agencies. The evidence suggests otherwise.

But as one of our other articles reveals (on page 12), those serving in the armed forces are themselves ill-served if they run into drug problems out on civvy street. Nor can physicians be expected to heal themselves if they too have substance misuse problems (page 2). Illicit drugs are now well embedded in society and, like alcohol or prescription drugs, can be used as a chemical crutch for those having problems at work as.

But so pervasive is the stigma and discrimination that attaches itself to illegal drug users, that nobody with a drug problem, however well socially integrated they are, can be assured of a sympathetic hearing if they turn to their bosses for help.

Harry Shapiro,

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Cover illustration www.peter-mac.com



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Druglink is for all those with a professional or occupational interest in drug problems and responses to them – policymakers and researchers, health workers, teachers and other educators, social workers and counsellors, probation and police officers, and drug workers.

DrugScope is the UK's leading independent centre of expertise on drugs and the national membership organisation for those working to reduce drug harms. Our aim is to inform policy development and reduce drug-related risk. We provide quality drug information, promote effective responses to drug taking, undertake research, advise on policy-making, encourage informed debate and speak for our members working on the ground.

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