

Tackling Drugs, Changing Lives awards: National winners announced

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National Drug Worker and National Drug Team of the Year 2006 announced by Drugs Minister Vernon Coaker at ceremony in Westminster

The Home Office has today announced the names of the two overall winners of the Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Awards 2006. The Drug Worker and Drug Team of the Year were picked from over 300 entries from across England and Wales. Both winners have received 10,000 for their organisation.

David Gordon, harm reduction coordinator at the Swaythling Clinic in Southampton has been named as National Drug Worker of the Year 2006 for his work managing the local needle exchange and for his tireless efforts to provide support for service users.

Cyswllt Ceredigion Contact, the Aberystwyth Day Service providing vital help, advice and support for drug misusers and their families, has won the title of National Drug Team of the Year 2006.

Home Office Drugs Minister Vernon Coaker said:

"These awards were set up to recognise those who are taking direct positive action to tackle drug issues in their local community. We have seen some sterling examples of innovative projects that are making a real difference to people's lives. Both winners show a standard of commitment and dedication that consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty to support both individuals and their communities. Tackling drugs is one this Government's top priorities and whilst we are making progress, we must do more. Drug-related crime was down 12% in the year to April 2005, but we need to bring this down further. Numbers entering treatment are up by 89% since 1998 but we need to get to more drug misusers into treatment. Working with the inspiration people I have met today, I am determined to create safer, stronger communities free from the menace of drug misuse".

Martin Barnes, Chief Executive of DrugScope and one of the awards judges, said:

"We had an incredibly high standard of entry for the awards. David stood out because of his clear dedication to helping those he works with and the real impact he's having on the local community.

"The team, headed by Maureen Fyffe, is not only an outstanding example of a service providing vital support to those affected by drugs, but also illustrates the importance of drug services working alongside other support services such as the NHS, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and housing agencies to provide the best possible service for drug misusers."

The two national winners were chosen from among 20 regional finalists - a regional team and individual winner in each of the English regions and Wales.

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