

Interview with Viv Evans

Abstract,

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Viv Evans began her career as a Health Education Officer in the 1970s. She then went on to be Deputy Director of TACADE (Teachers Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Education) which no longer exists. She was delivering training courses to teachers on alcohol and drug education, very new at the time. She then moved to DrugScope, to a post as head of education and prevention joint with Alcohol Concern, both organisations which also no longer exist.

She moved to Adfam in 2002 and has been there for the last twenty years. Adfam was set up in 1984 and she was the third or fourth chief executive. Adfam is the charity which works with friends and families affected by someone else's substance use. Their work aims to raise awareness of the issue and they also provide a national online 'Adfam at Home' service which is contracted to local authorities.

When she first joined a lot of their work was in prisons, with some core funding from government but that was withdrawn in 2007. They had funding during the Labour government to provide family intervention projects. For the last ten years, they have relied on funding from trusts and foundations for particular projects, advocacy work and for some direct services. This is now getting increasingly difficult to access.

They base their advocacy work on research and have just finished a report on non dependent drinking and couple conflict. They have also commissioned YouGov polls to give an idea of the prevalence of the problem. This can then be used in lobbying and advocacy.

Before she went to Adfam she was a member of the ACMD (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs), and produced the report Hidden Harm. It was a report on the impact of drug use on the children of problematic drug users. Her interest had been sparked when she heard from teachers how some children were left in the playground at the end of the day

because their parents were not in a position to pick them up. The report concluded that children are only going to be helped and supported if their parents get into treatment. A key recommendation was that services should work together to support these children. It was not an automatic conclusion to be made that parenting was always compromised by drug use and social services needed to be wary of that. Initially the report had an impact on the way local authorities and government responded and she would like to think it still does. She was chair of the implementation group which obtained examples from local authorities of how they were dealing with the issue.

She also chaired the Advisory Group for the Family Drug and Alcohol Court and a pilot was funded by the Ministry of Justice in three London boroughs in the first decade of the 21st century. A package of support would be put in usually around the mother who was at risk of losing her children.

She chaired the Skills Consortium set up by the NTA (National Treatment Agency) trying to disseminate good practice and professionalise. She is also involved in the International Society of Substance Use Professionals. There is much more consensus now round partnership working and approaches to dealing with people with a substance use disorder and supporting recovery.

Key individuals influencing her career have been Roger Howard at DrugScope and Eric Appleby at Alcohol Concern, from whom she learnt about management and leadership, also Joy Barlow who set up a residential home in Scotland for drug using women and children.

She sees an opportunity with the report by Dame Carol Black and hopes it will be helpful to the whole sector. From the Adfam perspective it is increasingly difficult to get money in.