



*Breaking the cycle of substance misuse*



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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **DEDICATED NORTH WEST WORKERS SOUGHT FOR TACKLING DRUGS CHANGING LIVES AWARDS**

The fourth annual national Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Awards, designed to recognise, reward and celebrate the work being done by drug teams and workers across the country, have been launched today (Friday, 12 June) by Home Office Minister Alan Campbell.

Nominations are being sought in the North West for people who have made an outstanding contribution to tackling drugs and who through the course of their actions have changed lives and communities for the better.

Examples could include those who help with diversionary sports training, drug enforcement activity or professionals who counsel and treat drug users.

Launching the awards, Home Office Minister Alan Campbell, said:

“Every day people working in the drugs field are changing lives for the better. Their work with individual drug users, families and across whole communities transforms lives and improves the places where people live.

“These unsung heroes deserve recognition for their efforts in going the extra mile to tackle drugs in our communities and I look forward to hearing many examples of the good work going on as nominations come in over the next few months.”

This year there are six award categories. In addition to Drug Team of the Year and Drug Worker of the Year there are four new themed categories looking for people who work with young people, within the criminal justice system, community engagement and the work involved in National Tackling Drugs Week.

There will be five finalists in each of the categories and from these, two overall National Tackling Drugs Changing Lives winners will each receive £10,000 for their organisation to spend on developing their work.

Anyone can nominate a drug worker or drug team whether they are a friend, family member, a colleague or a service user. More information along with nomination forms can be found online at [www.drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/awards2009](http://www.drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/awards2009)

The closing date for nominations is **Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009**.

Last year's winners included:

- A retired police officer, who now, as a drugs worker for a homeless charity, plays a vital role in helping to pick up individuals who slip through the net or drop out of treatment.
- A young people's worker who provides intensive one to one support and group work for young men who display challenging behaviour and who use a variety of substances.
- A specialist service for members of the BME community recovering from substance misuse problems.
- A family-focused crisis intervention service working with families where there are serious child protection concerns directly relating to parental substance misuse.

In the North West, last year's individual winner was Stockport-based volunteer Liz Wallace, who overcame 20 years of drug use to become clean and then work at helping others down the same path. The top project was the Spider Project, which provides an after-care service for former drug-users in Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral.

**ENDS**

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***Notes to editors***

1. Full information on the Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Awards 2009 and details of how to nominate can be found at [www.drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/awards2009](http://www.drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/awards2009)

2. For more on the Government's drug strategy, "Drugs: protecting families and communities" go to <http://www.drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

3. Last year's Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Award individual winner was Daniel from Smyth from Brent, London. Daniel's focus is on engaging young males aged between 13 and 19 who misuse a variety of substances and whose lives are falling into a downward spiral as a result of their misuse. Through group sessions at the Brent Centre for Young People, as well as one-to-one support meetings, Daniel finds ways of connecting and motivating their group to turn their lives around. Daniel's hard work and commitment have yielded positive results: a majority of the youths he works with have reduced their substance use and are also no longer selling drugs in schools or in the community. And a significant number are now attending school regularly and independently playing an active role in progressing their education.

4. The team award was won by Families First in Middlesbrough. Run by Middlesbrough Council, Families First offers support to families with drug or alcohol difficulties where there is a real risk that children may be placed into care as a result of their parents' substance misuse. The team has been described by the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership as a 'groundbreaking service that goes to the heart of the drugs strategy in reaching and supporting families at risk'.

5. Anyone can nominate a team or individual for an award: colleagues, family, community leaders, ex-service users – all are welcome to make a nomination. Nominees can work within any sector of the drugs field – prevention, education, treatment or enforcement. Practitioners from both the public and voluntary sectors are eligible. All nominees must work for a recognised organisation.