



Influencer Award

Name of organisation or individual nominated

Deirdre Boyd

1. What were you trying to change? (maximum 200 words)

Help us understand your vision, aims and the factors that drive you forward

Early in my recovery from addiction, 20 years ago, there was a change in policy via the Community Care Act which restricted access for people to go to residential rehab in order to get well from addiction. This meant that fewer people could benefit from the support I had received. I made the decision that in order to challenge this, I needed to speak up about addiction from an experienced standpoint. At the time, and for many years after, I was the only recovery advocate in the UK working across the addiction field and received little support in my advocacy work. Thus I created a forum for people in recovery working in the addiction field to come together and support each other. By speaking up as a person in recovery I provide a voice for those who are unable to do so for fear of recriminations. As a voice of recovery I can show that recovery from addiction is a reality when the environment permits, and I work to ensure that the environment is such. This includes challenging poor practice, policy and strategy, and educating people about proven techniques, supporting those working in the field and helping people to access better addiction treatment in order to change their lives and that of their families for the better.

2. How did you use your influence? (Maximum 200 words)

Who did you influence, what methods did you use to influence them and how did you overcome problems etc.

I was the first person working across the addiction field in the UK to speak up about recovery from addiction just over 20 years ago. I am now the CEO of the charity the Addiction Recovery Foundation (ARF), Editor of the bi-monthly journal Addiction Today, and organiser of the UK and European Symposium on Addictive Disorders (UKESAD), an annual three-day event, the largest of its kind in Europe and now in its ninth year. ARF's seeks to support people affected by addiction and, educate people about the prevention of and recovery from addiction. This is achieved via Addiction Today (with a readership of 40,000), via the website (www.addictiontoday.org) - with 150,000 visits per year and via UKESAD (with approx' 600 delegates from across the world). The majority of UKESAD delegates are people in recovery who are working

in the addiction field. This work influences the addiction field including workers, policy makers, academics, and government including politicians. I regularly meet with CEO's of related organisations, with MPs, civil servants etc in order to influence UK addiction policy and practice. I also engage with wider media in order to raise awareness about addiction, lack of access to good treatment and support, and to challenge perceptions about people in recovery from addiction. I am constantly challenged by detractors but I overcome these problems by speaking the truth, using research to support my argument and I will not be silenced.

3. **What changed?** (Maximum 200 words)

e.g. Did you change a law, an attitude, a policy, a conflict situation?

My work has highlighted systemic and practice flaws which have been changed. I have convened the Concordat recently in order to raise awareness about lack of access to residential rehab in the UK and this has already resulted in influencing discussion and policy in the UK. I had a major role in influencing the UK's first drug strategy, the draft of which excluded mention of treatment. I successfully campaigned to get treatment included as a goal. I also had an influence on the current governments most recent drug strategy where recovery is at the core (whereas harm reduction was the focus of the previous strategy). I have raised awareness about recovery from addiction, and via UKESAD have created a forum for people in recovery and working back in the addiction field can come together in a safe environment and support each other in their work.

Additional Nomination Comments from others

Deirdre Boyd is a tireless addiction recovery advocate and has been influential in challenging widespread beliefs that addicted people can't recover. She is the Editor of Addiction Today, a bi-monthly journal for the addiction field and the organiser of UKESAD (UK and European Symposium on Addictive Disorders). This three day annual event is the biggest of its kind in Europe and brings together addiction experts from across the world in order to improve practice in helping people to regain their lives by recovering from addiction. Deirdre is passionate about supporting people into appropriate addiction treatment and campaigns for greater options for people affected to enable them to continue with a drug and alcohol -free life, to reunite families and to become tax payers. She is a living example of what residential rehabilitation can do as she has been in recovery from addiction for twenty years and has for many years been the face and voice of recovery in the UK. Deirdre works with the media, policy makers, researchers and politicians in order to ensure they are informed about the current situation in the UK drug treatment field and she is highly respected in her work. It is without doubt that the recent change in UK drug policy which moves away from a harm reduction culture (i.e. continued drug use) to a recovery focus (drug-free) is the result of Deirdre's work. She is currently leading a campaign to support greater access for people to drug and alcohol

treatment in order to increase the current figure of 2%. She has written a book about recovery from addiction (with all proceeds of sales going to the Addiction Recovery Foundation charity).