

Dear EATA Members

I am writing to introduce myself to you all and to say I am very pleased to be able to offer you service as the Interim Chief Executive of EATA while Sharon Carson is on maternity leave. I hope that I will be able to do justice to the job and provide you with professional membership services. I hope also to meet as many of you as possible during my tenure.

I am working with a new Chair, Steve Rossell and some new members on the Board. We are conscious that this is going to be a difficult period for everybody involved in Drug and Alcohol treatment. As some of you will know I have worked in Treatment for most of my professional career and for those who don't know me there is a short bio here

There are a number of issues that we should be concerned about at present. In my opinion, the top three of these; 1 The inevitable downturn in public service spending, 2 The election next year with the high probability of a new Government intent on radical changes in policy, 3 Care Quality Commission's standards being introduced into the residential treatment sector then possibly into community services.

The above issues have the potential for serious and detrimental changes to our sector. We need to have a strong, unified approach to policy. In no sense does this mean we should present only one view of the way policy in the sector should be developed. It is essential however that we maintain a unified approach to the task in hand and overcome unnecessary divisions. For example, the tired lacklustre debate on harm minimisation versus abstinence is irrelevant to the task in front of us because all play a part in treatment.

For those of you who have not heard or read my thoughts on the subject I believe in harm reduction, needle exchanges and abstinence treatment. We need to create clear routes of access to abstinence treatment and offer tailored support afterwards through harm reduction and methadone programmes for the vast majority of drug users. For those who desire change in their lifestyles, we need the aspiration, skills and capacity to move people on. I strongly believe in recovery orientated approaches.

Despite Government efforts on policy, in practice, alcohol is still a second class citizen when it comes to treatment. The focus has been on education and PR campaigns which are largely funded by the alcohol industry. Yet alcohol affects the health of more people in the UK and is, as we know, top of

the list as an alternative drug of choice for heroin, cannabis and cocaine users. We must give alcohol treatment an equal place at the policy table and in our goals for users.

I am interested to hear of your thoughts as to what we need to do to organise a unified and comprehensive presentation on policy and to this end I am arranging for a consultation exercise when EATA's new communications manager, Katie Hill, commences, later this month. I will keep everybody briefed through regular e- briefings.

Although I work part time and only started work on July 1st, I have already met with Paul Hayes Chief Executive of the NTA. I plan to meet with the senior civil servants responsible for policy in our field. I have also spent a briefing day at the Home Office with colleagues from Drugscope, the Alliance, and Adfam. I am preparing a Business plan and am writing some articles on treatment issues. I am investigating ideas to increase participation from members and enhance EATA's communications.

I am looking forward to meeting old friends as well as new people from the sector. We must come together and support our clients regardless of which treatment goal they are trying to attain.

Yours sincerely

Peter Martin CBE

Interim Chief Executive