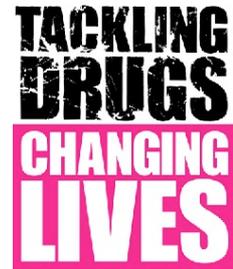


PRESS RELEASE

DATE: 16/05/06



TACKLING DRUGS CHANGING LIVES AWARDS

Perminder Dhillon from the Middlesex Drug and Alcohol Action Programme wins the title of Drug Worker of the Year for London

Perminder Dhillon has today been named as drug worker of the year for London. The national awards, part of the Tackling Drugs Changing Lives campaign, have been set up to recognise the work of those who are changing people's lives every day – teams and individuals who are taking *direct* positive action to tackle drug issues in their local community. Ten regional winners have been announced for the individual award and ten for the team Award.

Perminder launched the **Southall** based charity, Drug and Alcohol Action Programme, in 2003 to work with local communities specifically focussing on the language and cultural needs of Black and Ethnic Minority communities. In particular she identified a lack of drug education resources in the Somali community, which she addressed by producing education resources in Somali and English, complementing the resources she had already produced for Punjabi, Gujarati and Mirpuri Punjabi speaking parents. Perminder is now looking to raise funds to produce educational resources for the Tamil community.

Since launching the charity, Perminder has trained some 60 volunteers to work within their specific communities on drug education. She also runs an annual event in Ealing called 'Women Against Drugs' that works to break down taboos about drugs and addiction. In 2005 she launched the DAAP Woman of the Year Award to commend the courage and fortitude of local women in their fight against addiction.

Perminder Dhillon said: "For me this award recognises the vital work that our organisation, the Drug and Alcohol Action Programme, is doing with the diverse communities of London and is a commendation of all the hard work of our trustees, staff and volunteers.

"When we set up DAAP, we had a long debate about whether we could eradicate addiction. The stories of individuals and families that we work with show that we can. We will continue to empower communities to fight addiction and this award is a commendation of all the hard work that DAAP has achieved.

Judge Martin Barnes, Chief Executive, Drugscope said: “This is the first year for the Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Awards and we have had over 300 nominations – this shows both the breadth of work being done to tackle drugs and the impact it is having locally, on drug misusers, their families and the wider community. The standard of entry in London was very high, however Perminder Dhillon stood out because of her immense dedication, building up the charity from scratch and working in a tough environment to make a real difference in the community. This is a great example of someone seeing a gap that needed filling and finding a way to fill it.”

Two overall national winners will be announced on 23 May on National Tackling Drugs Day and each will receive £10,000 for their organisation.

The finalists are:

Region	Finalists – Team
East	The Clockwise Centre, Essex
East Midlands	SPODA, Chesterfield
London	Health E1 Homeless Medical Centre
North East	ESCAPE Family Support, Northumberland
North West	Addaction Cumbria Structured Day Care Team
South East	Brighton Oasis Project
South West	Gloucestershire Young People’s Substance Misuse Service
Wales	Cyswllt Ceredigion Contact, Aberystwyth
West Midlands	The Manor Hotel, Walsall
Yorkshire and the Humber	Dads Against Drugs, Hull

Region	Finalists - Individual
East	Diane Barlow, Peterborough Community Drug Team
East Midlands	Andrea Fox, The Drop Inn, Belper
London	Perminder Dhillon, Drug and Alcohol Action programme, Middlesex
North East	Sharyn Charlton, South Tyneside Drug Action Team
North West	Laura Brown, The Maden Children’s Centre, Lancashire
South East	David Gordon, Swaythling Clinic
South West	Andy Wright, Shaw Trust, PROGRESS2WORK, Wiltshire
Wales	Bradley Fellows, West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse
West Midlands	Noreen Oliver (nee Langan), Burton Addiction Centre
Yorkshire and the Humber	Carol Darbyshire, Drug Sense, Kirklees

-ENDS-

For further information on Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Day and regional media opportunities please contact: Salea Amin, GNN London, 020 7261 8343

Notes to Editors:

- The Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Awards will be held in London on 23 May and will be presented by Home Office Drugs Minister, Vernon Coaker MP and Broadcaster Dermot Murnaghan.
- The 'Tackling Drugs Changing Lives' campaign communicates the Government's Drug Strategy and demonstrates the impact it is having on communities across the country. There are four main strands to the Strategy:

1. **Prevention** – reduce the use of Class A drugs and the frequent use of any illicit drug by all young people under the age of 25, especially the most vulnerable.

2. **Treatment** – increase the numbers of problematic drug users in treatment by 100% by 2008, and increase year on year the proportion of users successfully sustaining or completing treatment.

3. **Tackling supply** – generate a sustained impact on the supply of Class A drugs into the UK, while working to tackle 'local' dealers and the availability of drugs in local communities.

4. **Reducing drug-related crime** – substantially increase the number of drug-misusing offenders entering treatment through the Criminal Justice System.

- There are 149 local Drug Action Teams/Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships responsible for delivering the Drug Strategy. Their work aims to tackle supply, target young people to prevent them becoming tomorrow's drug users, get more people into treatment and reduce the fear of crime that drug misuse can cause. Direct annual expenditure on tackling drugs has risen from just over £1.3 billion in 2004/05 to almost £1.5 billion in 2005/06.
- For more information about what the Government is doing to tackle drugs visit: www.drugs.gov.uk.

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