

# A winning combination? Professionals supporting survivors of violence are rewarded for their work



Sunita Patel and Sandra Harper describe the innovation and excellent practice honoured through this year's Una Padel Award winners.

*Una Padel was the Director at Centre for Crime and Justice Studies from 1999 until 2006 when she died from cancer. Throughout her career she was tireless campaigner for justice and social reform. The award was set up in her name to recognise individuals and organisations that share her commitment to penal reform, social justice, and decency. This year the awards sought to reward unrecognised commitment, determination, and potential. Nominations were made in support of those people or organisations people feel have made, or show the potential for making, a real contribution to helping improve the lives of offenders, victims, families, and communities. The award is split into two categories, organisational and individual, with a winner and highly commended entries selected for each category.*

## **Winner! – Individual category** **Paul Harrison, volunteer, Systematic Abuse of Males (SAM)**

Paul Harrison was nominated for his contribution to the services that SAM offers male victims of domestic abuse. The testimonials in support of his application makes it clear that he offers people genuine support and advice, which is often extended to the partners of the people accessing SAM's services. The person who nominated him describes him as '...a real life angel ... he has given us a future without violence and abuse'. Paul is not paid for the work

he does for SAM and due to the lack of funding and support from local authorities he is having to part fund it through his own pension. SAM is a diverse and multicultural group where the users have agreed on a set of principles based on equality, respect, and decency. These were all important qualities to Una Padel, and so the judges felt Paul Harrison was a worthy winner for this year's award. Hopefully this recognition will support Paul and help the project continue to deliver such a unique service to an often overlooked group. For more information about SAM visit: [www.samonline.org.uk](http://www.samonline.org.uk)

## **Winner! – Organisational Category** **Survivors of Domestic Abuse (SODA)**

SODA was formed by a group of women who were themselves survivors of domestic abuse. Following informal conversation between themselves they identified the lack of survivor support group in the area and saw a need to start their own group.

The women are from the Redcar and Cleveland area and meet regularly to discuss a wide range of issues. These range from concerns regarding their children, whether they feel supported or let down by the system/services they are using, to how they can best assist the work of the agencies working with women and domestic violence issues. SODA does not yet have its own premises, they offer to meet women in local

cafes, libraries, or wherever they feel most comfortable. They have a 24-hour help line, staffed completely by volunteers and others have been able to receive anonymous support via the social networking site Facebook. SODA says 'We do not claim to be professionals; however we do consider ourselves to be experts by experience. We have found that when a woman feels safe and comfortable with other women that have suffered too, she feel that she is not alone after all, and that she is totally understood and never judged'. The judges hope that by winning the Una Padel award 2009 SODA will be able to raise its profile and hopefully it will support them in gaining sustainable funding to help them expand their services. To find out more about SODA visit their website: [www.redcarandclevelandssoda.org/](http://www.redcarandclevelandssoda.org/)

## **Highly commended – Individual category** **Kay Rawlinson, volunteer, HMP Stocken**

Kay Rawlinson has volunteered tutoring sycamore tree courses in prisons for over ten years. Her ability to relate and appreciate the mindset of her learners is exemplary. Despite mobility issues which cause her considerable pain, she is at present running three courses at three different establishments. She shows real dedication and commitment to each of her learners and her non-judgmental attitude has been highly appreciated both

by learners and governors in each of the establishments that she has volunteered. A letter written by a learner requesting the governor to do something to recognise her work within the prison was submitted with the application and really demonstrated how much she contributes to the individuals she is in contact with.

### **Highly commended – Individual category**

#### ***PC Richard Harwin, Metropolitan Police Authority***

PC Richard Harwin was nominated for the work he is doing with people with mental health problems. He has gone above and beyond the call of duty to improve police links with mental health services and service users. He has shown innovation through developing an information-sharing protocol, whereby relevant information is shared between agencies. He is committed to tackling the significant barriers and mutual distrust between mental health service users and the police. By selecting PC Richard Harwin for a Highly Commended award, the judging panel wanted to recognise the challenging environment in which he is operating, trying to raise awareness around mental health issues. He works tirelessly to maintain links with mental health services and contributes towards improving the way the police deals with people with mental health problems.

### **Highly commended – Organisational category**

#### ***Switchback***

Switchback supports 18–24 year olds who have been involved in prison catering, and centres on building

long-term motivational relationships. A switchback mentor visits the person regularly before their release and continues to offer support and help once they are released from custody. The focus of the work is to stabilise the trainees' life and obtaining paid employment. Trainees are given the chance to gain work experience and complete relevant qualifications in the Crisis Skylight Café. The relationship between mentors and trainees is open ended and the charity's strength is their impressive dedication and energy. The judges were impressed by how much the organisation is able to achieve for their trainees with only three staff, as well as the recognition shown to tailoring support to individual needs. To find out more about Switchback visit their website: [www.switchback.org.uk](http://www.switchback.org.uk)

### **Highly commended – Organisational category**

#### ***Play Bus Service, Sure Start, Doncaster***

The Play Bus delivers the Children Centre's core offer to families who are geographically or socially isolated. Their target population includes marginalised groups with particular emphasis on families of prisoners serving custodial sentences in Doncaster. The judges were impressed by the initiative taken by the local PCT, Children's Services, and Sure Start programme to take the service to the prison to provide a comfortable, relaxing, and non-judgmental environment to families visiting their loved ones inside. The play bus has also engaged with partner agencies to provide sign-posting services in order to extend the support and care provided to the families using the service.

### **Highly commended – Organisational category**

#### ***Age Concern Older Offenders Project (ACOOOP)***

This project meets the needs of a group of people often not recognised by the mainstream services within prison establishments. The project provides a wide range of services and support to older prisoners including peer-group meetings, healthy living promotions, mental health support including memory clinics for dementia sufferers as well as resettlement advice and support. The judges were impressed by the selflessness and enthusiasm of the project manager Liz Davis, who, it is clear, has been crucial in getting the needs of older people in custody on the agenda. The scheme has grown from strength to strength since being established three years ago, and is now respected by users and professionals alike as a unique service to an often neglected group of people growing old in the criminal justice system. To find out more about ACOOP visit their website: [www.acoop.org.uk](http://www.acoop.org.uk)

Members of the judging panel and staff at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies would like to thank everyone who helped promote the awards this year. Thanks also go to everyone who submitted nominations for so many fantastic people and projects across the country. If you would like to be added to a mailing list to receive notification when the Una Padel 2010 award promotion is underway please email [info@crimeandjustice.org.uk](mailto:info@crimeandjustice.org.uk) ■

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**Sunita Patel** is Policy Associate and **Sandra Harper** is Assistant to the Director at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

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