

# Tackling drugs and alcohol:

Community  
course boosts  
branch official's  
confidence

If people with all the problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse come to you for help, you need to have a clear head and a big heart, but most of all you need a lot of confidence in yourself. And it was a five day training course for Community union branch officials that enabled Chris Tuck, (pictured here) who works at the Corus Lackenby plant in Teesside, to gain that confidence.

'There's no doubt, these training courses are terrific and I would recommend them to anyone,' Chris said. 'Great training, great confidence boosting, some brilliant tutors and a warm close togetherness of the small group of lay officials. We bonded so well together, the whole week was inspirational.'

As well as helping Chris do his work as a lay official for the union in Lackenby, the course has helped him with his work with people who have become dependent on drugs and alcohol. 'I am a trained counsellor, and my dream is to set up counselling facilities either near or on the works. Drugs and alcohol abuse is a massive problem, much bigger than most people realise. Cocaine and amphetamines are a particular problem.'

Chris believes that the current treatment of those addicted to heroin – giving them a substitute called methadone – simply isn't working. 'Believe me,' he says, 'it is a waste of taxpayers' money.' But something has to be done because so much crime now is drugs-related.

'You hear people say that 60 per cent of crime is caused by addicts who need to find money for their next drugs purchase. I think the percentage is much higher than that, I think it is about 95 per cent. It is a problem right across the board.'

Chris is one of those who has a very special view of what needs to be done.

'We ought to dispense some drugs to those who are addicted, in controlled conditions. It would be done by medical practitioners who would dispense cannabis and heroin. You would put the dealers out of business – and they are the ones who spread drug abuse – and crime would fall. Instead of breaking into a house, or stealing a handbag, or mugging someone for their mobile phone, the addict would get his or her supply from a clinic.'

'Now, this is going to happen one day, but right now no political party has the courage to do it. Once we have the drugs problem under control we can educate and re-educate people about addiction and we will begin to see the problem subside.'

Meanwhile, Chris is counselling those with addiction to alcohol as well as drugs, and the five day Community course he attended in Sheffield, has strengthened his resolve not only to be a good union official but to play his part in the wider community.

'As a group we grew very close together, realising that wherever we came from, whichever part of our union we served, we had the same kind of problems in common. That in itself was helpful, to know that others elsewhere faced the same difficulties and challenges. We have all exchanged email addresses and will undoubtedly stay in touch.'

'I must say, I have been in the union for 15 years and this course was one of the highlights.'

# Union Education: the key to success!



Announcing a new series of education courses from Branch Officials in 2007, Community Assistant General Secretary Roy Rickhuss, (pictured) said: 'Educating and supporting our branch officials to enable them to run an effective branch is critical to the development of our new union. That is why we have consulted widely and are implementing a new structure – and new content – for Branch Officials' education in 2007,' he explained.

Previously our branch officials' education course was split up in to three blocks of one, three and four day residential courses – adding up to eight days training over a year. However, following the review, Community is re-vamping the services to focus on the delivery of high quality training for branch officials to provide them with the skills and confidence to be able to represent members effectively across whole range of issues, including:

- **Handling grievance and disciplinary meetings**
- **Negotiations**
- **Building a strong, well-organised branch.**

The Course is accredited by OCN and those who successfully complete it will receive a Certificate.

The 2007 Branch Officers Education Programme will primarily be delivered in two blocks of four-day residential courses. However, because Community recognises that not every Branch Official will be able to attend residential courses, provision has also been made for them to be delivered on one day a week over four successive weeks in the Spring and in the Autumn.

The schools are delivered on a cross-regional basis as follows:

1. Regions 1, 2, 3 and 7 education courses will take place at Wortley Hall, Wortley, Sheffield S35 7DB.

*The first modules will take place 18th – 22nd March. The second modules will be delivered 7th – 12th October.*

2. Regions 4, 5, 6 and 8 education courses will take place at the NASUWT Administration Headquarters, Rosehill, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RS.

*The first modules will take place 29th April – 3rd May. The second modules will be delivered 18th – 23rd November.*

*Application forms for the courses can be downloaded from the education page on the union website [www.community-tu.org](http://www.community-tu.org) or can be obtained from your Branch Secretary or Regional Office. All completed forms must be returned via your Branch Secretary.*