

## The times

# Information on drug and alcohol services in the United Kingdom

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How would one find out the following information? Where to find a needle exchange in North Shields, residential rehabilitation for a drug user in Gwent, advice for a solvent misuser in Bradford, an urgent detoxification for a heroin user in London or alcohol counselling in Fife? One could contact the duty psychiatrist at the local hospital or even the duty social worker in the relevant social services district. However, if they did not know the Regional Drug and Alcohol Unit should be able to help. But if they were unable to, where else could one turn?

As psychiatric units move into district general hospitals and community mental health centres, psychiatrists are increasingly likely to see drug and alcohol misusers and will be regularly faced with this question. Regional Drug and Alcohol Units play a vital role in providing specialist treatment and training and in doing research, but professionals working at the frontline cannot rely on their services exclusively. Doctors need to be familiar with local services for drug and alcohol users. These are likely to be more accessible, user-friendly and less expensive than regional centres.

In this article several directories will be reviewed that give detailed information on national and local services for drug and alcohol users for the whole of the United Kingdom.

### **Alcohol Services Directory 1991/92**

Alcohol Concern

Ilkley: Owen Wells. 1991. Pp 154. £7.75.

From: Alcohol Concern, 305 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8QF

Alcohol Concern is a national charity which aims to raise public awareness of the problems alcohol can cause, to improve services and to promote prevention. Their directory has recently been updated and reprinted as a pocket-sized, paperback book.

The directory starts with an overview of national organisations which provide information, advice and education on alcohol related subjects, e.g. the Institute of Alcohol Studies and the Health Education Authority. This is followed by a list of organisations that have a network of local branches, e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous. Included at the end of this section is a

list of Regional Health Authorities' regional alcohol misuse co-ordinators.

The bulk of the directory is taken up with local services throughout England and Wales. Each county, and in London each borough, is presented alphabetically. All the alcohol services within these areas including NHS, voluntary agencies and independent bodies are described in some detail. The addresses and telephone numbers of each organisation are given, followed by details of the catchment area served, the waiting period, whom the service is designed for, the conditions of acceptance, the services offered, the length of the programmes, the staff employed and where applicable the fees charged. The directory ends with a helpful index of named services and agencies.

This is an extremely useful directory; its only significant failing is that it does not cover Scotland.

### **Alcohol Services in Scotland 1991/92**

The Scottish Council on Alcohol

Glasgow: SCA. 1991. 142 Entries. £8.50.

From: The Scottish Council on Alcohol, 5th floor, 137/145 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G23 5EW

The Scottish Council on Alcohol has made up for the deficiency in Alcohol Concern's directory by producing its own. Entries are arranged by Scottish region and then by type of service, e.g. community addiction teams, day centres, councils on alcohol, alcohol treatment units and residential places. Next to each entry further information is given on catchment area, opening hours, facilities, etc.

The directory comes as a ringbound booklet with an all-weather cover. It is A4 in size, which diminishes its portability potential but this is its only weakness.

### **Drug Problems – where to get help. The SCODA National Directory**

The Standing Conference on Drug Abuse

London: SCODA. 1992. Pp 179. £5.50.

From: SCODA, 1/4 Hatton Place, London EC1N 8ND

The Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA) is a national co-ordinating and representative body

for drug services and those working with drug users. The first edition of the directory was published jointly with the BBC's Drugwatch in 1986. It has now been completely revised and updated.

There are entries for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. Having said that there is only one entry each for Northern Ireland, Jersey and Guernsey.

The book starts with an introductory guide on how to use the directory and this is followed by maps of the United Kingdom divided into regional health authorities and counties. Details are given of national organisations which provide information, advice, or treatment for drug users. Thereafter the format is much the same as Alcohol Concern's Directory of Alcohol Services, with listings for each county and in London each borough.

It is an extremely comprehensive book and very good value for money.

**Drug Problems. A register of helping agencies (Scotland). 6th Edition**

Scottish Drugs Forum

Edinburgh: Health Education Board for Scotland. 1991. Pp 48. Free on application.

From: Health Education Board for Scotland, Woodburn House, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh, EH10 4SG

Although SCODA's National Directory has a section on Scotland, it only contains 11 entries. This directory gives a much more detailed account of drug services north of the border.

Entries are listed under Health Board regions rather than shires. All the usual information is given on local drug services and helping agencies. There is a useful section on HIV/AIDS services both nationally and at a local level.

The directory complements the one produced by SCODA and can be obtained for no more than the price of a postage stamp.

**Needle Exchange List**

Standing Conference on Drug Abuse

London: SCODA. 1991. Pp 69. Free on application.

From: SCODA, 1/4 Hatton Place, London EC1N 8ND

This document lists all the needle exchange schemes known to SCODA in England, Wales and Scotland. At the time of going to press there were no needle

exchange schemes in Northern Ireland. The authors indicate whether the scheme is part of a NHS facility, a community drug team, a pharmacy supplying needles free of charge or one selling them.

Ten years ago the very idea of a needle exchange, let alone a national guide to their whereabouts, would have been almost unthinkable in this country. This change has been brought about by the spread of HIV among intravenous drug users and the fear that the virus will spread beyond this high risk group to the rest of the population.

**The Re-Solv National Directory. Solvent and Volatile Substance Abuse. 2nd Edition**

Society for the Prevention of Solvent and Volatile Substance Misuse.

Stone (Staffs.): Re-Solv. 199. Pp 57. Free on application.

From: Re-Solv, St Mary's Chamber, 19 Station Road, Stone, Staffs. ST15 8JP

This directory is aimed at anyone who needs information on helping agencies for solvent abusers, be they users, concerned relatives or professionals.

The introduction explains what solvent abuse is, how to recognise it and how to help. There follows a section on national organisations which provide information, advice or help for solvent misusers and their families. Local services are described for the whole of the UK, which is divided up into 12 regions (nine for England and one each for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

There is a diverse collection of organisations and agencies willing to give help and advice to solvent misusers and their families. They include the statutory and non-statutory drug agencies as well as teaching organisations, support groups, youth centres and telephone help lines.

The book is especially recommended to those working in primary care and adolescent psychiatry where solvent misusers are more likely to be encountered.

These inexpensive directories contain a wealth of information about national and local services for drug and alcohol users and deserve a wider readership. Empowered with their collective wisdom doctors will know exactly where to turn the next time they are asked: where to get a heroin detoxification in Hereford, alcohol counselling in Alkerton or new needles in Newnham!