

## NOTES ON PANEL VISIT TO SILKWORTH LODGE

4th June 2004

In attendance: Deputy J. Dorey, Connétable M. de la Haye, Deputy G. Southern, Deputy M. Dubras, Mike Haden (Scrutiny Officer)

The Panel met a group of currents and former residents of Silkworth. Members then met Mr. Ian Rodger, Programme Director, and Mr. Frank Laine, Trustee, to discuss the principles and operation of Silkworth.

The notes on the first part of the visit with the residents were put together after the meeting to try to summarise the main points that were raised.

- The only approach that will work for addicts is through **abstinence**
- Addicts don't want to give up their addiction - they will generally do anything to hide from the truth. Addiction must be recognised as an illness - it can't be beaten just by will-power and is not simply a defect of character. The philosophy of Silkworth is the same as AA and NA.
- Therapy at Silkworth helps addicts to face up to the causes of their addiction and provide continuing support following the period of residence. Graduates often pop in for coffee or lunch. It is important also for new residents to see and talk with those who have gone through the experience and come through it successfully.
- Counsellors and care workers at Silkworth are in the main recovering addicts themselves, which gives great confidence to those working through the programme.
- Alcohol and Drugs Service (ADS) promote **Harm reduction methods**, eg cutting down on intake or change of substance. These have been suggested and tried many times by those present but without any success. These methods only address symptoms, not the causes. They seek to reduce medical and social consequences of drug/alcohol use and have a part to play for some people who may be able to control their lives through a methadone programme or other means.
- Staff at ADS take a clinical approach - none have been through the experience of addiction themselves.
- There appears to be very little knowledge of Silkworth among other agencies or GPs. Many came to Silkworth through word of mouth from an acquaintance or by pure chance because a consultant or GP happened to be aware of the programme. **Virtually no referrals from ADS.**
- One lady said, exceptionally, that she had been referred through ADS.
- One lady had been to the Priory in United Kingdom, at huge expense borne by her son, without knowing that Silkworth existed on the Island. In her experience Silkworth provided a better support system than the Priory because it was on a smaller, more personal scale.
- Many had been through several **detox** experiences but felt that these gave immediate physical relief but there was no after care system available to support those who wanted to stay clean. Therefore many soon returned to their addiction.
- Home detox is generally a waste of time as there is no on-going support and little preparation or explanation of the process.
- Drugs used in detox can be added to drug or alcohol to heighten effects often resulting in overdose.
- Little support available for those coming out of **prison** - many quickly return to drugs or alcohol. One lady had been fortunate enough to go almost straight into Silkworth. She was now clean after 15 months and was working as a care worker at Silkworth.
- The importance of a **quick response** was stressed many times - using the 'window of opportunity' when an addict is ready to accept change - sometimes even being 'forced' in by family or doctor. Waiting weeks for an appointment or detox bed to become available can be a missed chance to save a life, sometimes with fatal consequences.