

Harm Reduction on Merseyside:

‘It was twenty years ago today and it’s been going in and out of style’



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Trial and error in mid 1980s

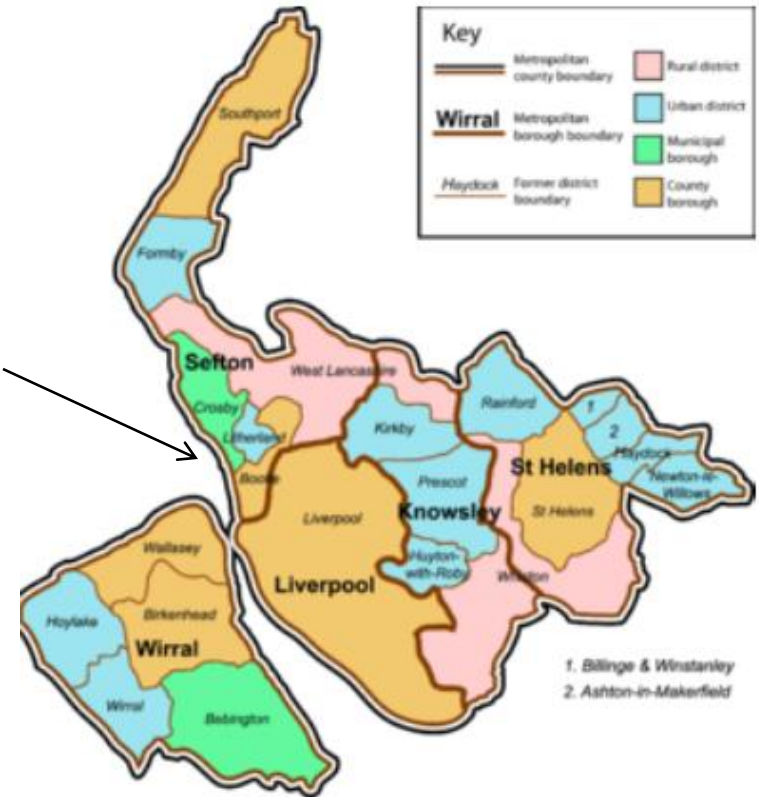
- Encourage, persuade & pressurise change
- Secure commitment to be drug free
- Cement agreement in courts
- Take the client to detox and/or rehab
- Return to area & drugs days/weeks later
 - set drug users up to fail
 - damaged relationships
 - damaged drug users self esteem
 - spoiled a chance to help
 - made prison more likely

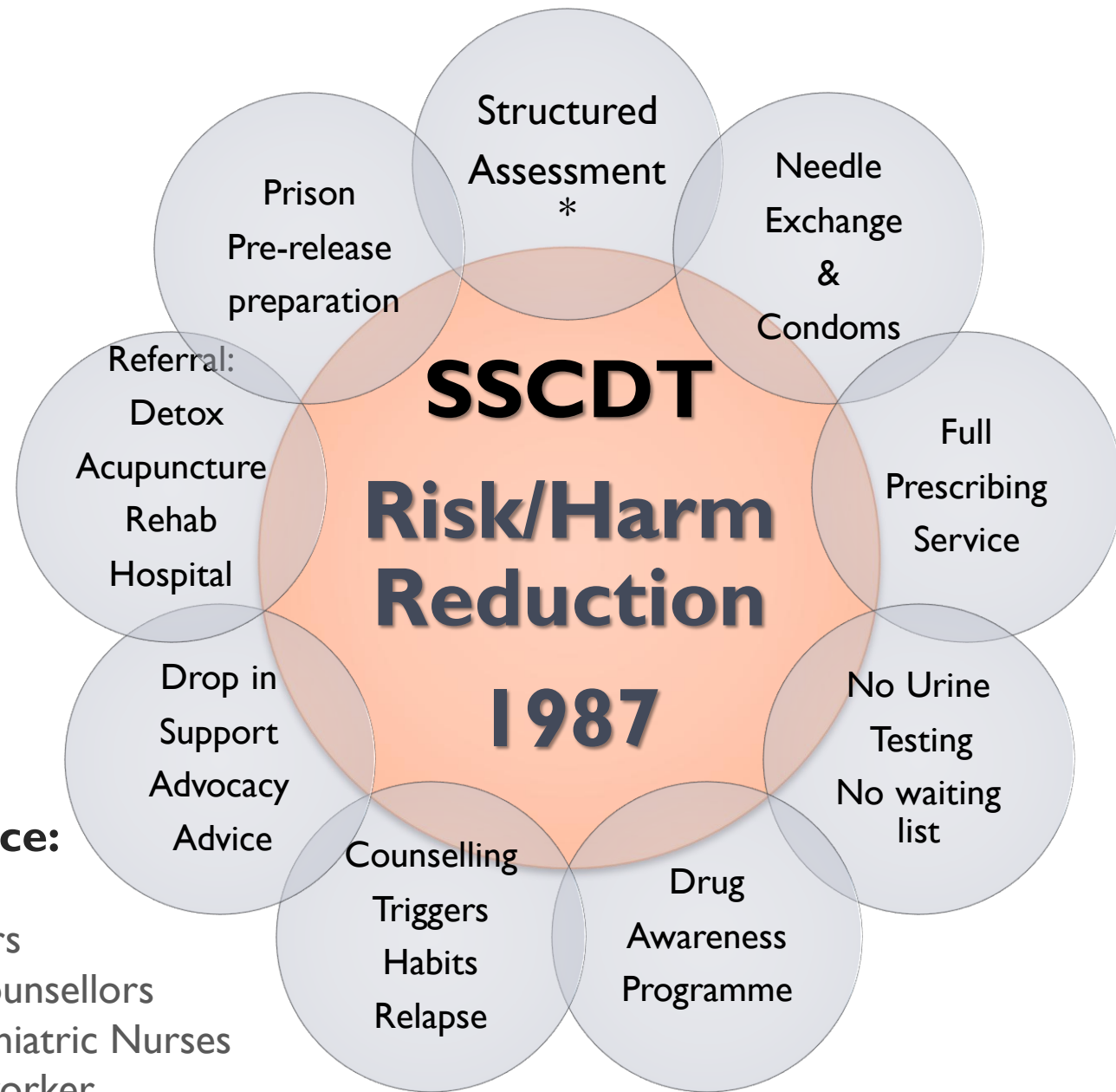
Abandoning counselling principles

- Listening
- Understanding
- Empathy
- Respect
- Unconditional Positive Regard
- Non-judgemental
- Going at the clients pace

Opportunities for change

- Maryland Centre
- Liverpool DDU
- Working in South Sefton:
 - Dr John Marks
 - Dr Russell Newcombe
 - Pat O'Hare
 - Andrew Bennett
 - Julian Buchanan
- South Sefton Drug Dependency Problem Team





Open plan office:

- Psychiatrist
- Probation Officers
- Social Service Counsellors
- Community Psychiatric Nurses
- AIDS outreach worker

* [Buchanan J \(1991\) 'Enabling Dependent Drug Users – A Cognitive Behavioural Assessment,' Practice Vol. 5 No.1, 1991 BASW, London P34-46](#)

Climate for change

- HIV AIDS greater risk
- Managers wanted 'something to be done'
- Need for policies, practices and guidance
- Bottom up approach top down ownership
- Relationship & team building amongst workers
- Share philosophy and strong voice:
 - Harm/risk reduction
 - Cycle of change
 - Motivational interviewing
 - Humanistic approach

Going out of style...

- 10 year strategy (HMSO 1998).
 - ‘break once and for all the vicious cycle of drugs and crime which wrecks lives and threatens communities’
- Anti-drugs co-ordinator (Drug Czar)
 - to tackle the ‘menace’ posed by drugs.
- Drugs Act 2005
 - drug testing for Class A drugs on arrest rather than when charged
 - 8 days detention if suspected to have swallowed evidence
 - Intimate body search, ultrasound and x-ray
- Reclassification of cannabis B-C-B
- Coercive drug treatment – drug testing, court reviews

Hijacked by the war on drugs

- Thinking, reason and rational debate replaced by sound-bites, propaganda and populism
- PDUs become a convenient enemy & scapegoat
- PDUs target for exclusion, discrimination & prejudice
- Labour manifesto:
 - 'will not tolerate illegal drugs'
 - Switch treatment - 'drug-free lives and reduce crime'
 - Increase prison places to 96,000
- Breach of Human Rights
 - 192 hours, ASBO, assessment, ultra-sound, x-rays
 - drug testing in schools and workplaces

Adopting Harm Reduction in the UK

- Full range of substitute prescribing
- Drug consumption rooms
- Needle exchanges
- Abandon MDT in prisons
- Decriminalise personal possession of drugs
- Emphasis on voluntary not coerced changed
- Replace the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Use drug testing sparingly or abandon



thank you

<http://julianbuchanan.wordpress.com/>