



FOUNDING FATHERS

The inspiration for the rising recovery movement in Britain has come from four Americans. **Mark Gilman** on the influence of Simpson, De Leon, White and McKnight.

As the organising principle for drug treatment, harm reduction was not rocket science. Provide needles and syringes to make contact with injection drug users and reduce the transmission of blood borne viruses. Provide maintenance medication to maintain that contact and cut crime. We did this and it worked. However by 2005 there was growing concern, within the sector and articulated in the NTA's treatment effectiveness strategy, that this was not enough. Questions began to be asked about whether recovery should be the organising principle for treatment.

In that year, a group of almost 20 commissioners, providers and ex-users met in Manchester to face this challenge from a local perspective. The north west was where the UK heroin epidemic started and we had a disproportionately high drug-misusing population. We

discussed the role of abstinence-based treatment and how to move from a focus on quantity to an emphasis on quality. This group gave birth to the North West Recovery Forum, which has been exploring the ways that treatment can be organised to support recovery ever since.

Recovery is now the organising principle of everything we do in the commissioning and provision of substance use disorder treatment. Building recovery in communities is one of the three pillars of the coalition government's drug strategy, with its commitment to create a recovery system that focuses not just on getting people into treatment but getting them into full recovery and off drugs and alcohol for good. There are a growing number of people who support and champion this movement in the UK, but where did their inspiration come from?

When harm reduction was the organising principle we often looked to Europe and Holland for inspiration and ideas. With recovery, we have looked to the US – and draw inspiration and ideas from four of their most influential recovery thinkers and writers. These are Dwayne Simpson, George De Leon, William L. White and John McKnight. Together they also represent a range of interventions that move from the individual to the collective. The treatment of addiction and 'addiction science' has focused primarily on the individual. 'Recovery' on the other hand is focused on fellowship, mutual aid, community and the collective.

Dwayne Simpson first came to the NTA's attention in 2005 as a result of the NTA partnership with the Institute of Behavioural Research at Texas Christian University. At that time the NTA was keen to look at ways of reducing the numbers of individuals who dropped out of treatment very early. Dwayne Simpson is internationally recognised for his work on maximising treatment engagement and retention. But it was Dwayne's emphasis on treatment as a journey that grabbed the attention of the North West Recovery Forum.