



**cyngor cymru ar  
alcohol a chyffuriau eraill**  
**the welsh council on  
alcohol and other drugs**

## **I've seen an idea with my own eyes – an idea for the world**

The jetlag has barely worn off, but Wynford Ellis Owen, Chief Executive of the Welsh Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs, is already a man on a mission since returning home to Wales. His Winston Churchill Fellowship to the USA has opened his eyes to a 'can do' attitude to addiction recovery. An attitude which he hopes to emulate to better build a strong "peer culture" into the services the Welsh Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs is establishing as part of The Living Room Cardiff initiative.

Wynford spent 2 months visiting a number of new recovery community centres that have achieved long-term recovery from severe alcohol and other drug related problems. A network of such centres exists in Vermont, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Washington D.C. and Virginia.

Wynford said, "What I learnt in America is that a message of recovery, as we understand it in the field of addiction, is a message for everyone.

"You only need look to other chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, asthma, high blood pressure, for example to see that all have a recovery focus. This focus allows people to be in support of each other and to support their mutual recoveries. This is a support that extends beyond the treatment, the doctor; hospital intervention and beyond even the medication.

"However, this is not currently the case for the principles of recovery for drug and alcohol addiction in the UK. I would like to suggest that we, all of us, get together to begin to talk about a universal concept of recovery – and principles of recovery that extend beyond the use of drugs; beyond the use of alcohol - to the overall population across the world.

"The only way it will work is to put the recovering people in the driving seat and to encourage them to put 'faces and voices' to their recovery stories. My Churchill Foundation journey has enabled me to take a back seat for a while but for good reason. We as practitioners were always in the driving seat of addiction treatment. Now however we must learn from the US model and take a back seat. And it doesn't take new money to introduce such a concept – just a willingness to change our attitudes."

**ENDS**