

# Anna Thorpe

## CRI

**CARAT (Counselling, Advice, Referral, Assessment and Throughcare)  
Senior Practitioner, Sentenced Male Offenders in Category D (Open)  
Prison.**



I decided 5 years ago that I wanted to work within the substance misuse field after studying addiction out of interest.

3 years ago, when I applied for my first position in prison rehab, I didn't expect a response as I had no relevant experience. However, I was assessed on how I relate to others and deal with challenging situations, and was lucky enough to be offered the position. I enjoyed the role so much I decided to follow this career path.

I have since attended several training courses and within a short period of time in the Ford CARAT team as Project Worker I took the opportunity to 'act up' as Senior Practitioner; the skills and experience I developed over my two months in this role assisted my successful recruitment to the permanent post, which I commenced in May 2007. I'm also applying for an NVQ in Health and Social Care to get my DANOS accreditation, which would be funded by my organisation.

I have been impressed by the training opportunities offered by CRI and feel this organisation will help me progress in the future. I feel supported by my manager and colleagues and I am able to take responsibility for my own caseload. Strangely enough, a prison is a very safe place to work because there are always other skilled and experienced people close by.

Every day is different and a day never goes according to plan because this client group have such varied needs. I may be asked to assess someone who is withdrawing from drugs and finding it difficult to cope. If the client needs further intervention I would book him in for a more comprehensive assessment then draw up a care plan and make relevant referrals to our treatment programme or a community psychiatric nurse. I may then visit Induction to see new arrivals who may be in need of support as clients tend to be particularly at risk immediately after transfer from closed conditions. We also run a drop-in service 3 days a week or I may do some one-to-one sessions delivering brief interventions including harm minimisation and relapse prevention.

The CARAT Team are also the 'gateway' to the Short Duration Programme and a usual day may also include attending post programme review meetings. If a client is due for release I would make a referral to their local Drug Intervention Programme. I have to juggle my senior responsibilities alongside the client work, but I feel I have been able to adapt to this quite well and quite enjoy the challenge this poses.

Although at times this line of work can be sad and stressful, the benefits outweigh the costs as it is so rewarding when a client has come to you during their rock bottom, having lost everything, then with your help they manage to turn their lives around, gain self-esteem and confidence and leave prison with a sense of pride in their achievements and everything to look forward to.