

# Steve Wood

## Outstanding Contribution Award

### Describe the work of the individual being nominated

Open Road is a UK registered charity offering support to vulnerable people in Essex and Medway on their journey to recovery from drug and alcohol issues, as well as offering welfare and criminal justice support services. One of our longest standing and most passionate advocates is our Criminal Justice and Welfare Manager, Steve Wood, whom we wish to nominate for DSC's Outstanding Contribution Award. Steve began with Open Road as a volunteer, before successfully starting work with us in 2000. Steve has a plethora of knowledge and experience, having since led our North and South Essex frontline teams who provide drug and alcohol treatment services to our clients on their journey to recovery. In more recent years, Steve's role has moved to oversee our various, wide ranging welfare projects and our criminal justice services. Steve's role means he works very long hours for us, far in excess of his 37.5 hour paid working life, has to wear many different "hats" and can be meeting clients, funders, commissioners and supporters alike in any given day in his role. He is entirely people focused, continually goes above and beyond in his role and holds a key operational role in our organisation where he manages several teams.

### Give examples of the projects or work the individual has done

Steve's work means he manages several teams including:

- SOS bus services in Colchester and Chelmsford which offer a safe haven at weekends from early evening to 4am in the town and city centres for vulnerable revellers and people in need. We also offer a similar London SOS bus service in partnership with City of London Police at key busy night times, which sees Steve do every shift, as well as getting the bus from Essex to London and back. These services are mainly volunteer driven, with our highly dedicated team of volunteers giving their own time to help the public, in partnership with the local night time economies. Outside of his normal role, Steve will also be on call to actively work shifts for these out-of-hours services if volunteer availability is low over a given weekend, even after having worked a full week. In this key role, Steve also liaises with local pubs and clubs to encourage strong partnerships working, which also engenders a fundraising spirit in these organisations who hold various charity events for the SOS bus services.
- Essex Women's Service, which supports women in the criminal justice system who are referred to us by the probation service. The service also benefits from partnerships with The Wilderness Foundation and The Greenlight Trust, who Steve and his team liaise with, offering our clients the opportunity to be out in the countryside learning new skills and confidence.
- Essex Appropriate Adult service, which again is volunteer driven, with our Appropriate Adult volunteers attending custody suites throughout Essex every day of the week to ensure that the welfare rights of vulnerable adults and young people in custody are upheld. Steve can also be on call to attend custody suites up until 11pm if volunteer availability is poor at any given time, alongside his normal role.
- Festival Welfare Services, where Steve manages and supports our teams of volunteers at some of the best known UK music festivals, offering welfare services to vulnerable festival

goers. Steve oversees the set up pre event, manages the service over the festival period and oversees the dismantling of the service after the event. Again, this is done while he works a normal working week.

### **What has been the impact of the projects or work that the individual has contributed to?**

All the projects and work that Steve has contributed to actively improves people's lives. From going above and beyond while working on our frontline services supporting his teams as they helped vulnerable and sometimes chaotic, aggressive individuals in the grip of an insidious addiction, to extra hours given to the Essex Appropriate Adult service which ensure that vulnerable people in custody in Essex have their welfare rights maintained day and night. Our Colchester, Chelmsford and London SOS bus projects offer one of the few night time safe havens in this city or town centres where people know they will receive help, medical care if required and above all, a friendly face from our dedicated teams. The SOS bus services also reduce ambulance call outs and A&E admissions thanks to the on board qualified medic who is a member of every shift the buses undertake. The women's service helps rebuild the lives and confidence of women offenders, showing them the positives and benefits that can be derived from a life free from offending. Our Festival Welfare service again keeps vulnerable people safe and gives them a safe haven, ensuring they can enjoy their time knowing we are there to help in times of need.

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