



When is a Drop-in Not a Drop-in ?

We all thought New Horizons was a drop-in service, we came when we liked, chatted with our friends, drank tea, had dinner much the same we did at the 'Corner House' drop-in or the Langley drop-in.

However, the truth of the matter is in clause 9.1 of the Service Plan on which the New Horizons service was built:

9.1 There will be a maximum of 60 service users in the building at any time receiving a service. This will be made up of 45 service users receiving a structured day care programme who will access the service, following assessment of eligibility thorough referral by community mental health service staff. Up to 15 registered service users will use the service for a social benefit which will be a self referral service. This will be closely monitored to ensure that a drop in service does not develop.

Now considering this is supposed to be a 'user led' service, why exactly was this and the entire service plan never mentioned to SHMUG or to any of us. I would describe the way this service has been run as a 'users dragged around by the hair in the dark' service. We may be mentalists but we're not stupid. Now that we know we have the right to all information relating to our service under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act there can be no more secrecy, no more cover ups and we can tell them when they get it wrong and break the rules.



The other question that arises is: 'What do they call a drop-in ?'

If New Horizons 'service for a social benefit' was not a drop-in then what is so different about Sunrise that makes it a drop-in ? Or is Sunrise not a drop-in either ?

The truth has been revealed to us, We must tell you all or we are no better than those who kept it from you. After the events of the past 2 years very little surprises me any more, but the New Horizons service plan was a real eye-opener.

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The Future Has Been Delayed ... Thank You For Waiting

When Michelle Johnson first announced that the New Horizons service would be put out to tender she gave us the following timetable:

Mid 2007
Tendering process begins, bids considered.

December 2007
Decision made winning bidder declared.

April 2008
Winning bidder takes over running of the service.

But the plan has changed.

Firstly we know from John Starky and Susanna Yeoman that the results of the consultation will not be ready until Late January or February.

The results will then be turned into a service specification which will take some time. Assuming this is ready for late February, Martin Lower (Contracts Manager Slough Borough Council) has told us it will take at least another 6 months before the change of management. So the new timetable looks something like this:

February 2008

Consultation complete, Service Specification written.

March 2008

Tendering process begins, bids considered

September 2008

Winning bidder takes over service.

The change of timetable is fairly unimportant as long as the service specification reflects our views from the consultation. It would be interesting to see the consultation results when they're ready.

New Horizons - What They Didn't Want You To Know

The service plans, contracts and any notes Mind have taken on you are all available to you under the Freedom of Information Act.

Here's a few fascinating facts from the New Horizons service plan.

Firstly I should explain a few things: In the following extracts from the New Horizons service plan:

The Supplier = East Berkshire MIND
The Purchaser = Slough Council
The Service Users = Us Lot

4. Legislative Requirements

The Service Provider and the Service must:

...

4.2 Comply with all legal and statutory requirements (including food and hygiene, fire regulations) in respect of employee or service users.

Food hygiene regulations were not observed at New Horizons or Sunrise until we blew the whistle on them.

This negligence could have given us all food poisoning or got us raided by Public Health Inspectors.

6. Standards & Regulations

The supplier will:

6.2 Regularly consult with service users, as currently represented in Slough by SMHUG (Slough Mental Health User Group), families and advocates and other stakeholders about the services provided. This should establish whether or not the service is meeting service user needs; take into account any suggestions made to improve the service and inform the purchaser of outcomes. The Supplier will undertake and provide to the Joint Commissioning and Development Manager Activity reports and annual user satisfaction surveys. (Quarterly as in Para 20.1).

As any member of SMHUG will tell you, they were not consulted about any of the changes at New Horizons. The Service Management Review Group at which User Representatives and/or Advocates were meant to be present had never even been heard of by either group.

9. Service User Group

9.1 There will be a maximum of 60 service users in the building at any time receiving a service. This will be made up of 45 service users receiving a structured day care programme who will access the service, following assessment of eligibility thorough referral by community mental health service staff. Up to 15 registered service users will use the service for a social benefit which will be a self referral service. This will be closely monitored to ensure that a drop in service does not develop.

From the very beginning New Horizons was never meant to be a drop in and clause 9.1 says it in no uncertain terms.

13. Information Sharing

13.5 Service Users information will be held securely and will be made available to service users on request.

This allows you to see your own records although under Freedom of Information you have this right anyway.

21.3 Local Performance Targets

A. Make initial contact with a potential user within seven calendar days of receiving a referral.

B. Provide a service within 14 days of receiving a referral.

...

I. Achieve a move on rate of at least 90% of service users where possible, within two years of entering the Service to reintegrate into the community.

Did you know you're supposed to be a member within 14 days of referral? We know a few people who've waited quite a bit longer, up to 10 weeks.

What exactly does 'move on' mean? If it means get a job then I'm not surprised the words 'where possible' have been added as it would be hard to do this with unemployed people without mental health problems. If it simply means stop using the service and go back to our bedsits then this target is of questionable use to us.

These kind of targets usually come from central government in an effort to save money - like the target to take a million people off Incapacity Benefit whether they're sick or not.

23.1 The Service

A service review group and contract monitoring meeting will be held six monthly by the Service Management Review Group chaired by the Joint Commission Manager Mental Health which will also be attended by:-

- The Locality Manager
- The Joint Commissioning & Development Manager (Mental Health)
- The Contracts Manager, Slough Borough Council
- Service User Representative/ Advocate
- The Supplier's Representative.

No Service User or Advocate had even heard of this group until Mike Paxton with the help of Fiona Mc Taggart MP got hold of the service plan from Slough Borough Council. It's existence came as a surprise to Tim Kendall, Advocate for SEAP.

Mike had to work hard to obtain this as the Service Plan was not supplied to us when it was first written and we were excluded from this group. Participation in this group would have given us the Service Plan.

We can now see exactly what happens when we don't see the contract.

The mental health 'professionals' who are supposed to care for us have flouted the contract left right and centre with impunity.

The next service plan will not be kept secret, we will ensure this by use of the Freedom of Information Act and the methods we used to get this one. Only when we know the rules can we make sure they 'play the game'.

Frank Toner has promised Mike Paxton that the full text of Part B of the New Horizons Service Contract (The Service Plan) will be made available to all who attend the January 25th LIT meeting at 12.00 pm at the Town Hall.

Poets Corner

When the cat asks the bird
'How are you today?'
The bird should be wondering why.
For only a fool of a birdie would say
'I'm unwell and unable to fly.'



Way of The Ferret



Consider Way of Ferret...
Scurry down hole of deception,
Dig deep for Rabbit of Truth...
Bring him to the Light
Where all may see him...
For he is a Wondrous Rabbit indeed.

Victorian Table Manners - Amaze Your Friends

You're a guest at a dinner party
you've had enough to eat and wish to
say so without offending your host.

Try this on for size:

"I've had an ample sufficitude -
Any more would be superfluous"

Fascinating Facts

Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846, John F Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946. Lincoln was elected President in 1860, Kennedy was elected President in 1960. Lincoln's wife and Kennedy's wife both lost a child while living in the White House. Both presidents were directly concerned with Civil Rights. Both were shot in the back of the head in the presence of their wife. Lincoln was shot in the Ford Theatre, Kennedy was shot in a Lincoln, made by Ford. Both were shot on a Friday. John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln in a theatre and fled to a warehouse, Lee Harvey Oswald shot Kennedy from a warehouse and fled to a theatre. Both assassins were killed before being brought to trial. There were theories that both assassins were part of a greater conspiracy. Both assassins had 3 names with a total of 15 letters. Lincoln's successor was Andrew Johnson, born in 1808, Kennedy's successor was Lyndon Johnson, born in 1908.

Clans of long ago that wanted to get rid of their unwanted people without killing them used to burn their houses down - hence the expression 'to get fired'.

The phrase "rule of thumb" is derived from an old English law which stated that you couldn't beat your wife with anything wider than your thumb.

Pound for pound, hamburgers cost more than new cars.

Every time you lick a stamp, you use 1/10 of a calorie.

Banging your head against a wall uses 150 calories an hour.

Extraordinary SMHUG Meeting February 7th 1.30 New Horizons

'Why you telling us ?' I hear you say.

'Why should we be interested ?'

'What have SHMUG ever done for us ?'

Well for one thing it's down to the hard campaigning of Peter Grebe-Striebbling of SMHUG that we now know some of the truth about New Horizons. He's also requested all information relating to contracts between Slough Borough Council and MIND concerning Mental Health Service Provision for Day Care Services leading up to and since the opening of the New Horizons Resource Centre. He's also requested the minutes of the "Service Management Review Group" which was meant to be attended by a User Representative but which no user has ever attended or even heard of.

A couple of years ago I looked on SMHUG as a group which talked a lot but really didn't make a difference. The actions of Peter Grebe-Striebbling do however speak louder than words. SMHUG will elect it's officials at this meeting and their will most likely be a battle between 'talkers' and 'doers' at this meeting. Suffice to say if the 'talkers' win then SMHUG goes back to its old self 'busy doing nothing'.

The last meeting was quite eventful, there was talk of resignations and one member made a thunderingly awesome speech to Susanna Yeoman. I like the new direction SMHUG has taken, sometimes it is necessary to ask awkward questions not cosy up with management and accept whatever they say. Some of them are prepared to learn from the mistakes of trusting management at New Horizons.

Anyone can say they speak for you, but when they've never spoken to you how can they know what to say. At least Peter actually comes to Sunrise and talks to us - who else in SMHUG can even say that. We should all turn up to the meeting and give Peter our support - he's stood up for our rights and he's one of us.

Words of Wisdom

Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.

Sir Winston Churchill



Crazy frog on a bike!



NEWSFLASH

Outdoor Smoking ban abolished on Ward 12 Heatherwood. Still banned on Ward 10 Wexham Park Hospital ?

Who's got the Steering Wheel ?

Once upon a time, in the land of New Horizons there was a 'Steering Committee' run by Good Queen Deborah and her happy subjects. I'm not sure exactly what it did as I wasn't a committee member but I know that some of us were on it. Meanwhile in a land no service user had ever seen there was a Service Management Review Group run by Prince Leroy. Now it was carved in stone (in the Service Plan) by deep magic before the dawn of time (oh all right, in 2004) that we the subjects ('Service Users') would sit at the great table with the mighty ones and hold the great wheel of power which truly steered the service, but Prince Leroy never told us of this great secret so we remained powerless. The Queen fell, many pretenders to the crown came forward, one of whom dissolved the steering committee and we all began to notice that the service was apparently steering itself as if by some unpleasant kind of magic. So was the 'Steering Committee' a real steering wheel or was it the toy one you give to your child so they can pretend they're driving ?

I just got a letter from Princess Susanna announcing a new 'Steering Group'. Now I like a good fairy tale as much as the next guy but why not have users on the Service Management Review Group like we should have done in the first place. This is a breach of contract that makes a joke of all other 'Toy Steering Wheel Groups'. The Service Management Review Group is the only one the bigwigs bother sitting on so it must be the real one.

So now what do we do ?

The Management have been very naughty boys and girls.

We're dealing with people who don't bother checking Health and Safety regulations, who've done their utmost not to consult us even when their own Service Plan says they should. The contract was 'too fair' to us so they hid it and breached it.

Well I think the best we can say is 'Never Again'.

When we are involved in groups that have real power to shape the service and cannot be phased out at the whim of management, all put in writing and signed by the management, then and only then can we even begin to trust these people again.

Are You Getting It Every Month ?

You'd like it more often? Wouldn't we all... But for now SMH News comes out every month. You can pick up a copy at Sunrise Club, New Horizons, or Langley drop-in. The Man With No Fax Number will give you one if you can find him.

If you want to be really sure you can email subscriptions@sloughmental.co.uk and we'll send you the email version every month. Read the latest issue and any previous issues at www.sloughmental.com.

Have you got a story, a poem, an interesting photo, something I haven't thought of ?

Email it to editor@sloughmental.co.uk and see your name in print maybe (unless you wish to remain anonymous). .

