



News On What is to Come

Hello and welcome to the March edition of Slough Mental Health News. April fools ! No, it's the April edition, I've decided to take March off this year and hold April Fools a few days later than usual.

The service specification which will decide the shape of our new day services now looks to be ready for April rather than March. So the new service could well still be launched before Christmas.

A number of venues for day services are under consideration and no decision has yet been made as to which is the best. We will be visiting The West Wing and Chalvey Community Centre on April 18th to see which one will best fit the purpose. There may be other visits.

The new service will hopefully be a lot better than the old one, but if we're still unhappy with what we've got there is an alternative... We can opt out and use direct payments to arrange activities more to our liking.

I have heard a true story of some folks who weren't too happy with their day services and decided they'd rather go fishing instead. Direct payments allowed them to do just that and travel to different fishing places around the country. The question arises: What if a group of us decided to hire a hall somewhere and run a drop-in service our way?

The government are very keen to increase the uptake of direct payments and for those of us who become so dissatisfied with things as they are that they no longer attend day services, as some already do, they do provide an alternative.

I have been told that the value of direct payments will be approximately £30 a day. There is a certain amount of paperwork to do but you do get a greater choice in what you do with the money.

I'm not saying direct payments is for everyone and I would like to talk to someone who's already done it before

I'd consider doing it myself.

In any case, if the new service turns out to be an improvement then maybe there'll be no need to go down that path.

If you didn't get the February issue the main points I want in the specification are as follows:

1. A five day drop-in service as promised by Gerry Crawford.
2. Implementation of our top priorities as stated in the consultation survey.
3. All work done by us to be paid as it was in the days of New Horizons, (unless of course someone volunteers to work for nothing).

If we are to be 'included' into the world of work then it is only right we should be 'included' into the world of pay.

Jerry Severwright of Sunrise Club Retires

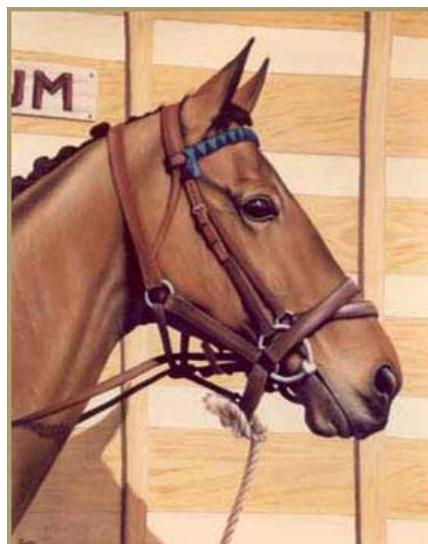
Jerry, who has been a member of staff at New Horizons since it's opening and at Sunrise Club since the closure of the New Horizons 'referred drop-in', has retired at the age of 63.

I have been unable to find a photo of Jerry for this article but after his long years of service I think we all know what he looks like.

We wish him a happy retirement and hope he doesn't get too bored without us.

Goodbye Jerry and good luck.

Gerry, 'The Horse', Crawford Leaves Slough And Moves To New Job In Bracknell



At the visit of Fiona MacTaggart to Sunrise Club on Friday the 28th of March Gerry Crawford unexpectedly appeared and announced his career move out of Sunny Slough and also that he would be funding our trip to Belgium.

He has been promoted to Assistant Director of Operations for East Berkshire NHS, a job based in Bracknell, and the new Locality Manager for Slough will be under his direct command.

This being the case we hope the new Slough Locality Manager will keep the promises their boss has made to us "From the Horse's Mouth".

Fiona MacTaggart MP Visits Sunrise Club

By Peter Grebe-Striebling

In a relaxed atmosphere with a slightly disappointing member turnout for the visit of our MP for Slough, members had a lively discussion about the future, past and present of our services. A problem with members coming to such a meeting on a Friday is that many go to the Langley Drop-in. This provides a service 1 day a week on Fridays and is a remnant from the old Corner House days before the inception of New Horizons. This is relevant of mention and noteworthy as the Langley Drop-in was also part of the service that was to have been axed last year. One of many reasons why Fiona became involved and came to talk with us today.

At first members asked Fiona questions about general government policy on all sorts of issues. This one would expect as service users have interests about national and world issues like anyone else. Many felt more in the pictures from her replies.

Things got more down to business when Fiona went around the room & specifically asked clients what they thought of it 'here at Sunrise'. This drew a variety of responses. Some were very happy with the nice setting in the 'countryside'. Others said they had been very happy at New Horizons and said the problems there were nothing to do with us. She was reminded it had been a modern purpose built resource built for us and officially opened by Prince Edward & Sophie Wessex, no less. We had hot meals every day there, (still provided at the Friday Langley Drop-in) and of great import to many. Others became more pointed and asked our MP if she would proud to tell her colleagues in Westminster that this was where her constituents went every day as part of the Health Service. This opened the conversation up for others to say that having alcohol problems made it very difficult for some to come. Even though the bar is shuttered the smell of alcohol is still a problem.

Then in a personally most telling moment, one client said she was coming and returning home every day

on the bus from Hounslow. She had recently moved from Slough and Fiona and all of us were made indelibly aware that at this moment this was all this client had and 'Sunrise' meant so much to her it was worth the considerable effort to travel here everyday. She should be commended for her tenacity.



The discussion moved on to the world of work. At this point Gerry Crawford, Slough Locality Manager, walked in. Many were incensed that the one time over all the years we have involved our local MP together as service users and felt free to openly discuss things; one of the protagonists involved in all we wanted to talk to her about and all the trouble caused was now hovering in the background. One of us later told him 'frankly I find your presence could be interpreted as intimidating'. Mr Crawford later told us he had not known of our MP's visit. This, given his and others extreme interest in this magazine in the past and the SMH News front page reporting of this event with Fiona's photo & date of visit! Mr Crawford through his staff and team meetings would surely have got this news which makes his claim quite astonishing.

Mr Crawford could have said "Sorry, I'll come back in an hour and speak to you later" but instead proceeded to eavesdrop on a conversation between a Member of Parliament and her constituents.

The meeting continued, it became established very quickly that the curve from leaving services and returning to work was very sharp. A more gentle curve needed to be developed. It was pointed out that many had tried working and many had encountered employers who had frankly said to us (although hard to hear) that the likes of us were plain 'unemployable'. Also worrying is that there was an idea that work is the answer to all our problems. I personally pointed out that in the Service User movement, many realise the phase in our lives we're going through has actually been 'deeply meaningful and/or spiritual'. Despite the comments we get, even surprisingly from the highest levels in Mental Health Services in this town, we are not 'lazy', 'doing nothing all day', 'sitting around smoking all day' nor are we 'losers'. Always, of course, assuming that there is something wrong with that anyway. (After all many do all this on the Costa's as well, except we're long term ill and don't have much money. Both groups are usually on drugs though.)

A place like Sunrise & being with friends when we choose, interacting with stimulating staff, for us is a therapy. Any doctor will say, for instance, with schizophrenia one needs as stress free an environment as possible to aid recovery. An uncomfortable truth is that many of us are so damaged they will never be able to return to the world of work. It may take a lifetime to get free in ones head first before even thinking about re-engaging in a world of work which made so many unwell in the first place.

Fiona next related to us that she had been in discussions around the future site of day services and said the Upton Hospital site was a clear possibility. In the 2007 consultation a town centre site was our first choice location for day services. It must be noted however that Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Eve D'Souza at L.I.T. meetings at the town hall and on other occasions has often stated her opinion (noteworthy as one of the reasons for

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

moving us out of New Horizons) that us being too near the CMHT is not ideal. [For whom? No-one ever expressed this to me. I do hope it isn't because the team upstairs in New Horizons in whose care we were, felt we were too close to them. Fiona was told that going to a day centre every day in 'Hospital' Grounds was an even more backward step. I think Dr D'Souza's view on this proposal would be of value and interest. At least we were with the 'Community' mental health team before.

Fiona MacTaggart then said she had been to the Reading Resource and had been very impressed. Also the editor of SMH News has been

similarly impressed and documented his visit in the February issue of SMH News. I told Fiona that the User Group had visited Reading Resource among other centres and were so impressed that on the committees that met for a year before New Horizons opened it was agreed that this was the best model for Sloughs Day Services. Sadly I had to relate after many, many years when New Horizons had finally developed into what we'd all envisioned we were promptly moved out, (with all the current resulting difficulties).

The meeting closed and Nigel and Mike thanked Fiona MacTaggart very much for coming.

After Fiona MacTaggart left Gerry Crawford said to everyone he had come to say goodbye as he was leaving for a new job with the East Berkshire NHS in Bracknell.

It must be added however, a Service User did amusingly comment that 'had he and his colleagues had their way last year there would not have been many here to say goodbye too. And do remember, my fellow members, this article would also have had to pass the Censor.

This is a short summary of the points discussed. Please write to us if anything has been missed & add or reply with comments to continue the debate.

Fascinating Facts

The cruise liner, Queen Elizabeth II, moves only six inches for each gallon of diesel that it burns.

Leonardo Da Vinci invented scissors.

In the last 4000 years, no new animals have been domesticated

Babies are born without knee caps. They don't appear until the child reaches 2-6 years of age.

Michael Jordan makes more money from Nike annually than all of the Nike factory workers in Malaysia combined.

In the great fire of London in 1666 half of London was burnt down but only 6 people were injured

The glue on Israeli postage stamps is certified kosher.

Sherlock Holmes never said "Elementary, my dear Watson."

The oldest known goldfish lived to 41 years of age. Its name was Fred.

About 96% of all American children can recognize Ronald McDonald.

Research indicates that mosquitoes are attracted to people who have recently eaten bananas.

A sneeze comes out of your nose at over 600 m.p.h.

More Rabbit Than Sainsbury's

I saw this cute fluffy bunny hopping around the grounds of Slough Cricket Club with about half a dozen friends & family. These bunnies are very shy and will run like hell if they see you coming. I managed to get this photo by shooting through the 2 inch gap between the locked front gates and the wall with an 18X zoom lens..

The bunnies will occasionally make their way into the Langley side of nearby Upton Park where they will calmly sit there watching the cars go by but will bound off at speed if you approach them on foot. They clearly consider pedestrians to be more dangerous than motorists, guess they've never heard of drive-by shootings.

On a good day this place is Sloughs answer to Watership Down and also features squirrels and model aircraft.



Wildlife Special - Strange Cat Like Creature... Quite Big

I received this photo in the email and was amazed to see an unusual cat like creature even larger than the 'Black Beast of SADSAD'. The 'Black and Orange Beast' looks a lot like a Siberian Tiger. These cats often eat deer or antelope for lunch and with the recent sightings of Bambi in the neighbourhood may have come here to feed.

Anyone who sees the black and orange beast should not approach it as it may not have had its kit-e-kat. Tiger experts are attempting to catch the beast with a big bowl of cat food and a very big net.

When asked for their phone number the tiger catchers said 'Foil or slap'. What could they mean ?



Kestrel Visits Sunrise Club

This small bird of prey can hover motionlessly on the wind and this particular one came to hover outside Sunrise Club. It's not the first time we've seen one but it is the first time we got photos.

While the Black and Orange Beast might possibly be an April Fools Joke, the kestrel was seen by quite a few people.



More Fluffy Bunnies



Two hunters go into the woods.
One collapses and the other rings for help telling the operator he thinks his friend is dead.
When she asks if he is sure, she hears a gunshot before he comes back on the line to say 'Ok, now what?'

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 will 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).

