

Slough Mental Health News



Issue 8

For Justice and Equal Rights for Customers of Slough Mental Health Services

May 2008

Slough Mental Health User Group to Fold

With the resignation of its Secretary, Chairwoman and the retirement of its Vice Chairman it was decided at a meeting on the 17th of April that SMHUG would call it a day.

There will be one more meeting on June 5th to decide how to distribute the groups funds - Sunrise Members Fund, SPACE Counselling perhaps, suggestions welcome.

The question now arises - do we need something to replace it. Perhaps we need something more along the lines of a union... An organisation that takes votes of it's members and so carries the authority of us all and not just a small group. That takes the views of it's members and negotiates with the management to achieve our members wishes.

'A union?' I hear you say 'What if we don't get what we want? We can't exactly go on strike'.

Yes, that's true, but thanks to direct

payments we can take our business elsewhere. If they don't give us what we want we don't have to try and change the service - we can choose another service or even be the service. We can follow the example of the guys who went fishing on direct payments and set up a service that does what we want.

Perhaps we could call ourselves the Slough branch of the UMC (Union of Mad Customers). Yes, I know some of you will object to being called 'Mad' but of course mad has a double meaning - it also means furious and I think as of late we've had much to be furious about. I believe being called a 'User' is far more insulting. Ultimately I think we should come up with a few ideas and then take a vote on it as we did on the 'Sunrise News' title. We must feel good about ourselves, be mad & proud, a 'League of Loonies' a 'Mentalist Movement'.

Langley Drop-in Safe

At a meeting of the Drop-in sub group of the Day Services Steering Committee, Susanna Yeoman stated that as the Langley Drop-in was a successful one day service with quite a few customers it would continue to run regardless of other changes to day services.

Regarding the Sunrise Club, if another location were chosen for a drop-in then the staff of Sunrise would move to the New Location.

If there were sufficient demand to keep Sunrise then Peter Grebe-Striebing's proposal for a 'user run' social club at SADSAD could be enacted to keep it open.

The use of direct payments could certainly make this viable and finally we could do it our way without interference from every clown in the circus as other minority groups have done for years.

Rabbit of The Month



A slightly fiercer looking bunny this time.

MIND Contract Extended

In order to maintain a continuing service while the consultation & bidding process continues to set up the new service, MIND's contract has been extended to March 31 2009, the end of the current financial year.

Forging A New Image

I believe any new organization should find itself a 3 word name (like SAS, FBI, NUM), a cool logo (and of course some members).



The UMC logo uses the Mad Hatters Hat as a recognisable symbol of who we are which is also quite fun.

The SMG logo features the Orange Star of Wexham (used on the signs to the Psychiatric Unit).



The word 'Mentalist' says 'Mental Health Service User' in 1 word, it's less stuffy, boring and official and at least we don't get called 'USERS' any more.

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Latest Visits to Possible Day Service Venues

Whichever site is finally chosen the plan would be to hire a room 5 days a week as a drop-in area and then hire other rooms when required for the various activities.

West Wing



Situated in the former Arborvale School, almost a mile from the town centre, on the No 3 bus route, The West Wing has ample parking. For those who fancy a bit of exercise it's a 15 minute walk from the bus station. As an Arts Centre it runs it's own classes in art, drama, dance, etc and can hire us rooms to run our activities. Voluntary work at the West Wing gets you free tickets to shows etc. Rooms which were once art rooms and woodwork rooms could be used for these purposes again. We saw a room which might make a good art room, it certainly had plenty of light.

As a former school its sports fields could be used for various sports but this requires the approval of nearby St Josephs School, I'm not sure why.

It has a café serving various snacks, sandwiches and hot and cold drinks at commercial prices and beer in the evenings and weekends. The café is open from 12.00 - 2.00 pm and has a wireless internet connection.

The West Wing has possibilities as a venue for Art, DIY, and other activities. From our point of view it is unsuitable as a drop-in centre for the following reasons:

Food and drink are at commercial (high) prices, there is beer on display in the cafe making life worse for those of us with drink problems than at SADSAD (where at least the beer is behind shutters). I'm sure if John Millican were with us today he would say 'No bloody way!' to this and it's our duty to say the same. Rest in Peace John, we will not forget you or

what you stood for.

As a former school the West Wing is a large, monolithic and institutional building less cosy and therapeutic than SADSAD. Those of us who have been bullied, abused and had nasty childhoods may not appreciate going 'back to school'.

The more heavily medicated / confused amongst us may well get lost in the maze of corridors.

This is not a 'Safe Place', it is open to a public who are mostly hostile to us. We were introduced to just 2 people as 'Mental Health Service Users' one said very little, the other said we could look around as she'd 'Hidden the Knives and Scissors'. Perhaps she was joking but some of us could take offence at these words. This bigoted contramentalist slur could be considered mild compared to what others might say. To those who bang the drum of social inclusion, I say 'Remember the Upton Hospital Public Meeting... Loonies? Not on our High Street! Slough Observer Pg 1'.

My first impression on seeing it was "A dark satanic mill in a grimy area down the road from the graveyard". It just looks so damn depressing.

Chalvey Community Centre?

Chalvey Community Centre has a large main hall and a large industrial kitchen. It had no suitable rooms available 5 days a week so is not suitable as a drop-in but could be used for activities. It has lots of parking space and is opposite 'The Garibaldi' pub. Training courses are available from the Chalvey Learning and Advice Centre in the same building. The ASDA bus stops at the local shops down the road, access by car is tricky due to Chalvey's traffic problems especially at the railway bridge junction.

Thomas Grey Centre

We visited the Thomas Grey Centre on April 28th. This centre is 5 minutes walk from Slough Bus Station, does not offer drop-in facilities but with it's two dedicated IT rooms with a dozen machines each and a computerised smartboard and at least 2 PCs in every classroom it would be a good place to run IT

training and other courses. Courses available include IT, Sewing/dressmaking, Flower arranging, English, Belly dancing and a simple DIY course. Students also get an information and guidance service to help them choose courses, get jobs etc.

Langley Community Centre

Situated on the Langley Road on the 58 bus route with other buses stopping nearby, parking is available in the Langley Pavilion across the road. Langley community centre has a large sports hall which can be partitioned in two and a medium sized industrial kitchen. The size of the partitioned hall and kitchen compare favourably to the New Horizons Café and are available 5 days a week. There's a public park across the road if you want some green and pleasant.

The Langley Pavilion also has a hall, a kitchen and some rooms for hire but only on Mondays.

Child Contact Centre

I have discovered that the building that was once known as the 'Child Contact Centre' is now known as the 'Family Centre'. I visited the building and rang the bell - there was no answer, a notice on the door read 'We have moved to the Rotunda, Northampton Ave', so it appears the building is currently not in use.

I have received an email from Frank Toner stating that the Family Centre is unlikely to be available to us ... he has not yet told us why. A central location like this, yards from the High Street and suggested by one of us, appeals to me and is only site I have seen that could seriously be used to implement a 'Reading Resource' style service.

While many of these sites have possibilities for activities, I feel the therapeutic peace and natural beauty of SADSADs surroundings, cheaper food & drink and easy access to many sporting activities at no extra cost are so far unmatched elsewhere and in terms of what it offers, remains the best site for a drop-in.

My apologies for the lack of photos here, but there's loads of news this month and only so much space .

What Have SMHUG Ever Done For Us ?

1. Advocacy.
2. One to One Counselling at SPACE.
3. Crisis Beds at New Horizons (when cash becomes available).
4. Funded and Supported Black and Ethnic Minority Issues including conferences.
5. Ensured crossover from Cornerhouse to New Horizons was seamless rather than us having to wait 6 months without a drop-in service.
6. Crisis Cards (voluntary) for us to produce if in trouble.
7. The Directory of Services.
8. The Wexham Park Hospital discharge pack.
9. Raised Awareness of our issues at New Horizons, Wexham Park Hospital, LIT meetings, Berkshire NHS trust Board of governors & at various meetings and national conferences.
10. Trained Nurses in Mental Health Awareness.
11. Helped individuals to move from harassment or possible eviction. Always listening to what people are saying & making the right people aware on all levels.
12. Berkshirewide Group campaigning for better service provision Berkshire wide (including Slough).
13. Donations - coatstand, table & chairs now at Sunrise. Donations to MIND & UKAN to help with their work.
14. World Mental Health Day - organised by SMHUG 1996 - 2006. Raising awareness through local media, Star FM etc to reduce the stigma that comes with mental illness.
15. Organised trips to Brighton, Bournemouth, New Forest, Butlin's, Minehead & Panto at Beck's Theatre in conjunction with Slough and District Mental Health Association and other groups.
16. Always supported staff in the event of any criminality to help us feel safe in our day centres.
17. Took part in endless committee meetings to set up the service we once had at New Horizons.
18. Wrote letters to MPs, PM, Chancellor, Minister of Health, DWP etc.
19. Art Trip to Norden Farm Arts Centre (2006).
20. Liased with National Groups like MIND, Kings Fund, SANELINE, & UKAN (UK Advocacy Network) on Slough Issues.
21. Talked to schools and gave out Mental Health Information to the next generation to promote understanding and reduce stigma.
22. Established the principle of service user representatives being present at interviews for new staff members.
23. Campaigned for the 24hr Crisis Response Team we have today.
24. When we were offered a 2 day drop-in service at SADSAD, SHMUG offered to pay for the other 3 days and then Slough Council agreed to pay for a 5 day service and Gerry Crawford agreed to maintain it.

Etc etc....

SMHUG is Dead! Long Live Whatever Replaces it!
If Nothing Replaces it then umm.... Long Live Nothing!!!

Fascinating Facts

1. A Saudi Arabian woman can get a divorce if her husband doesn't give her coffee.
2. Every person has a unique tongue print.
3. Women's hearts beat faster than men's.
4. When Bugs Bunny first appeared in 1935, he was called Happy Rabbit.
5. Bubble gum contains rubber.
6. Men get hiccups more often than women.
7. Only animal besides human that can get sunburn: Pig.
8. Ostriches stick their heads in the sand to look for water.
9. In the Caribbean there are oysters that can climb trees.
10. Eskimos never gamble.
11. Pearls melt in vinegar.
12. The average bed is home to over 6 billion dust mites.
13. Starfish have no brain.
14. Ernest Vincent Wright wrote a 50,000 word novel without using a single letter "E".
15. Dolphins sleep with one eye open.
16. Bulls are colour blind.
17. Apples are more effective at keeping people awake in the morning than caffeine.
18. A can of SPAM is opened every 4 seconds.



Questions & Answers

Email from Danny Savage to Susanna Yeoman, cc Gerry Crawford & Frank Toner:

Dear Susanna,

It has been some time since the last meeting of the drop-ins sub group, when I recall we decided to visit the West Wing site and the Family Centre site (if available) and to research SBC's property list to see if other suitable venues were available. I have a few questions on this.

1. Have any of the site owners replied to your request for a visit?
2. Is the Family Centre (aka Child Contact Centre) currently not in use and available to us?
3. Is the West Wing site the preferred option and future site of day services?
4. Have any other possible venues been discovered?
5. At the recent visit of Fiona MacTaggart MP to Sunrise Club she said that Upton Hospital was still a clear possibility as a site for day services, do you agree?
6. Has a return to New Horizons been ruled out?
7. If, for example, the West Wing were chosen as the new day service location, what would this mean for the future of Sunrise Club and the Langley Drop-in?
8. When the new Slough Locality Manager takes over will they be free to cut drop-ins to any level they see fit (1 day a week, say) despite Gerry Crawford's promise that our 5 day drop-in service is safe.

Considering the pressure of time on completion of our tasks it puzzles me that this sub group has met only once and so many questions remain unanswered. I realise you may not have all the answers so I've cc'd this to Frank and Gerry in the hope they can fill in the gaps (on question 2 and question 8 in particular).

Kind Regards,

Dan Savage

Answers:

1. **Susanna:** Yes, we have a reply from The West Wing for a visit on 18th April, one from Chalvey Community Centre on the same day (which has been cancelled) and one from The Thomas Grey Centre for April 28th.
2. **Frank:** The Family Centre is unlikely to be available.
Susanna: I will check with the Children & Families Department to make sure that The Family Centre and The Child Contact Centre are the same building. If not then perhaps the Child Contact Centre may be available.
3. **Susanna:** No, it's just one of a number of sites were considering.
4. **Susanna:** Chalvey Community Centre and The Thomas Grey Centre.
5. **Susanna:** The Therapeutic Day Unit may well be moved to Upton Hospital but not a drop-in.
6. **Susanna:** No.
7. **Susanna:** Langley drop-in would continue, Sunrise would close. If enough members wished the Sunrise drop-in to continue then Peter Grebe-Striebling's idea of having a 'user-run' social club at SADSAD would be considered.
8. **Frank:** Gerry's promise regarding the drop-in will be honoured.
9. **Susanna:** The 5-day drop-in service will be written into the service specification.

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). .

