



SHMUG II - Return of The Smhugi ?

On February 20th from 10.30am to 3.30pm there will be a meeting at The West Wing to discuss the creation of a new group to represent our interests.

If this group is to represent us then we must elect its leaders, we must reject any attempt to impose leaders chosen by the management as such a group would be a complete waste of space. SMHUGs leaders were elected and so should these new leaders.

We must learn from the mistakes of the past:

Communications are all important: The group must keep its people informed on what it is doing or the people may think it's doing nothing. The people must know how to contact the group and seek its help.

Publicity:

When the new group is launched it should have eye catching leaflets in all mental health daycentres, hospitals, libraries. Never again must we have a situation where they say "SMHUG? Who are they?"

For if even your own people don't know who you are, how can you recruit new members and grow?

The Internet:

As a means of communication and publicity this cannot be ignored. Email is fast, efficient and free. News of what your group is doing is visible anywhere in the world. If people are so ill they cannot leave their home how else will they find you?

The Shock of The New:

An experiment has begun, after years of drop-in type services the government have decided to throw us into the community. We are the lab rats here and we must choose some brave rats to represent us. Rats who will say "Hey, stop spinning our hamster wheel so fast" or "Where's

our cheese?". Those who agree with management on everything no matter how we suffer are no use to us.

Unity Is Strength:

The group will become more credible by taking votes on important issues. "75% of my members are opposed to your plan" is a lot more impressive than "I'm opposed to your plan."



Darth Craw-Ford once asked Mike Paxton how representative SMHUG was. Mike said "Can you name anything we said that was unrepresentative?" The Craw-Ford could not, for he knew not our thoughts or what was representative.

The point is that taking votes stops anyone calling you unrepresentative. When you know your people are behind you it's like the force is with you, it gives you strength.

A guy stood up at a Sunrise members meeting and suggested that Sunrise should have its own user group. Good idea, why not organise like a union, with local branches and shop stewards communicating with the leadership. Votes could be taken locally and the results sent back to head office. Daycentres, Mental Health Groups and various other

organisations could form local branches.

What's in a Name:

Never underestimate the importance of a name. SMHUG sounds exactly like SMUG and smugness is not a desirable quality. Inspirations, I'm almost certain, is the name of a box of chocolates, and a range of exotic lingerie.

I have a few suggestions:

- US - Union of the Stars
- FFT - Federation of Free Thinkers
- LOFT - League Of Free Thinkers
- TCS - Tribal Council of the Stars

The star reference is to the Orange Star of Wexham (the symbol of the mental health units at Wexham Park hospital). The star is a soaring symbol of hope and god-like power and many nations and armies use it in their flags. It would make a good logo. "We may all be in the gutter but some of us are looking at the stars".

I think Union of the Stars could be a good one, especially if its leader could call himself/herself US President. And of course the initials spell 'us' which has a great sense of fellowship and unity to it.

What's really important here is that it's our union and we decide how it works and what it does. We must take control from day one and not let it become a management puppet or a powerless talking shop.

A Catchphrase:

"I speak not just for me, I speak for US"



Susanna Yeoman on The 4 Day Drop-in Service

Following the closure of Sunrise Club on Thursdays I put the following question to Susanna Yeoman:

Bearing in mind the community based bias of current dayservice thinking, can we expect further cuts to drop-in services?

This was her reply:

Dear Danny

Please excuse the delay in response. My thoughts on your query are as follows:

Firstly, any programme of day activities should certainly be based on the needs of the local community. As you know we consulted extensively with service users and others, and you will remember from the steering group that we also considered local and national guidance on best practice for day services. Balancing all perspectives was quite a challenge, and I believe that the service specification produced by the steering group is a reasonable attempt to represent the breadth of views.

However, local needs and requirements do change over time, so it is true to say that drop in arrangements could reduce, if it were felt that assessed needs could be better met by another means. It is important to state though, that if this were to happen, it should not be assumed that this would mean a reduced or inferior service overall. The commitment is to provide choice to individuals, which improves services by enabling people to select options that best meet their needs and aspirations, whether through leisure activity, adult education, employment, direct payment, drop-in, or any of the other range of options we discussed.

Regards the changes to MIND Thursday service, I have been in support of this as a trial, provided that risks are assessed and effectively and flexibly managed. For example, if a service user needs a particular contact on Thursday that cannot be met through the community activity, then this contact is provided by the

team in another way. I do understand that change can be difficult, but as we discussed at the LIT, unless we sometimes try and do things differently then we do not get the chance to improve. If we can change things in a way that leads to improved services, with individually tailored activities to choose from, in time people may come to see this as a benefit. I hope we will be proceeding with the day service tender as soon as possible, and I look forward to more discussions between the provider of the new service and service users, to ensure that we have the best possible range of options. I also sincerely hope that we will have many service users willing to express their views and help evolve more of a 'user led' model.

Thanks for your continued input to the discussion, please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any issues clarified.

Best wishes and happy new year.

Susanna

Communications Problems at CMHT

We're hearing a disturbing number of complaints about CMHT failing to make follow up calls promised to clients referred by the Crisis Team and cancelling appointments without notice.

This is not a new problem, the issue was raised at LIT meetings last year, but still the problem persists. I was out with 6 of my friends and 4 of them have had these problems, I've a readers letter this month about it, I've overheard CMHT staff talking about how the phones wouldn't stop ringing with people angry about appointments cancelled without notice.

Fail to return a call at the Gas Board, perhaps you lose a customer. Do the same in Mental Health and perhaps you lose a customer permanently.

Has anything actually been done to deal with this problem? Is anyone monitoring these systems to check if things are getting better or worse?

What does it take to put the system right? Dead bodies?

I've no idea why this is still going on, the entire system should be investigated for faulty procedures and equipment right down to the fax machines.

If the systems are ok and the problems are down to human error then a Customer Charter should be installed like those at the Utility Companies where people who suffer unreturned calls and appointments cancelled without notice are paid financial compensation. Perhaps those responsible for the problems could be fined to finance the scheme.

There are some good people at CMHT and I sincerely hope these problems are down to the incompetence of the few.

I make no apology for saying that those responsible are playing Russian Roulette with our lives and must be shown that shoddy service will not be tolerated and does not pay.

Unfinished Business

Some time ago they cut our 5 day drop-in service to 4 days. This was not necessary. If the café/shopping activity was done on Friday instead of Thursday that would leave 4 days (Monday to Thursday) at Sunrise and the Langley drop-in on Friday - a 5 day drop-in service. The management will still have their community activity day, where's the problem? Sounds fine to me.

We'll take a vote on it and if you're with me I'll take it to LIT meeting, and call for things to be changed.

It is time we had our say on this.

THEY SAY MONEY DOESN'T BRING HAPPINESS. BUT AT LEAST LET ME PROVE IT.

Spike Milligan

Readers Letters

From The Sensible One:

Mike often gave me a copy of your wonderful newsletter. Great work. You're one voice singing in the darkness. You're waving a flag of hope for us mentally ill (or those blessed with madness?) I drift in a twilight zone world of semi-reality, ebbing and flowing between the shores of madness and normality (sort of). Keep waving your flag - keep beating your drum - because the world needs to hear it Danny.

Brilliant article on Mike. I sometimes called him "The Working Class Hero".

The Sunrise Drop-in down to only 4 days! Heaven help us. Reminds me of an old song - 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. But at least in the song they stopped at one! Will we end up being that lucky? The big-wigs will be telling us soon we should be grateful for a one day drop-in in this "harsh economic climate - where we must all tighten our belts and purse strings." It's such drivel. Don't let the bastards grind you down.

From John The Forunner:

The other day I felt suicidal, I'd been staying in bed till the afternoons. I hadn't rung the crisis team for a few months, so I phoned them and spoke to a really nice lady, who gave good advice and said she would fax CMHT and that they would telephone me to talk things over. The next day I telephoned again as I still felt bad, a nice male advisor spoke to me and said he would fax CMHT and they would be in touch, It's a lottery sometimes some of those people can "talk you off the phone".

That was 2 weeks ago and I've heard nothing from CMHT, not a thing, what sort of message is this sending to people who are weaker and more vulnerable than me! Certainly this letter would not be published in the new glossy magazine.

This is a huge issue and should be addressed with immediate effect as it is a very common occurrence which brings the service into disrepute.

A Protest Song

I've reached the conclusion
That social inclusion
Is just an illusion
From a world of confusion.

The press call us psychos,
The public heart's hard.
They hope we don't mind
But they don't want our kind...
Not in their back yard.

One day we were banished
From God's coffee shop.
They said business was business
And it just had to stop.

Did they bar us for madness ?
Or the money they crave ?
I hope they can sleep,
I'm sure Jesus will weep...
As he spins round & round in his grave

Un-Christian Christians
Yea I'm talking to you.
By your deeds shall we notice
That your words are untrue.

Do you think that you're righteous ?
Do you think you've done well ?
You may go to the church every Sunday
But one day...
I'll see you in Hell.

So answer our question
As you throw us out there.
Do you think for a moment
That communities care ?

For some are indifferent
And some are just cruel.
So don't say
They all love us today...
We ain't nobody's fool.

Danny S



Our Friend Mike

God bless you Mike
We say goodbye
For every light
Must fade and die

But your light shone
For all to see
Great Memories
Will stay with me

My dear, dear friend
Great times we shared
You helped so many
Your heart cared

To know you Mike
Was really great
Sleep in peace
My special mate

This poem by The Sensible One
was read at Mike Paxton's
Funeral

Strange But Legal

In Kentucky, it's the law that a person must take a bath once a year.

In Florida, it is against the law to put livestock on a school bus.

In New Jersey, cabbage can't be sold on Sunday.

In Singapore, it is illegal to chew gum.

In Virginia, chickens cannot lay eggs before 8:00 am or after 4:00 pm.

In Washington State, you can't carry a concealed weapon that is over 6 ft long.

In the state of Colorado, a pet cat, if loose, must have a tail-light !

Fascinating Facts

In Tokyo, a bicycle is faster than a car for most trips of less than 50 minutes!

There is one slot machine in Las Vegas for every eight inhabitants!

Popeye's 4 nephews are called Pipeye, Peepeye, Pupeye, and Poopeye!

Forest fires move faster uphill than downhill!

Most lipstick contains fish scales!

It's illegal to drink beer out of a bucket while sitting on a curb in St. Louis!

A mole can dig a tunnel 300 feet long in just one night!

A hippo can open its mouth wide enough to fit a 4 foot tall child inside!

A cockroach can live several weeks with its head cut off -
it dies from starvation!

You're born with 300 bones,
but when you get to be an adult, you only have 206!

The worlds oldest piece of chewing gum is over 9000 years old!

A slug has 4 noses!

New Months Declared

We hope you've enjoyed our Jabruary edition, Jabruary is the last half of January precision joined to the first half of February by banging a few nails through it.

Coming soon, Farch, Mapril, Army, Majun, Juju, Juglust, September, October, Nocember and Danuary.



Hail To The King !

One Day I Saw A Leaflet - It Was Called 'MIND Your Business' So I Thought 'OK, Fair Enough.' and Didn't Read It

Isn't it reassuring that some members of the mental health establishment have reached a sufficient level of computer literacy to do a bit of Desktop Publishing. Perhaps one day they will develop computerised crisis management and appointment systems that work, perhaps not yet though.

I note the 'Locality News' is looking for a new title - might I suggest 'The Locality Advertiser'

There are more adverts for services than actual news, and the 'News' is not exactly 'New'.

Mental Health Day happened three months ago, so if this is their idea of

red hot front page news I can only say 'don't give up your day jobs'.

If their next front page is about Mental Health Day too I shall have no alternative but to roll about laughing uncontrollably.

There is of course already a publication which advertises all the available services: it's called the Slough Mental Health Services Directory, developed by Slough User Led Consultation (R.I.P.)

While I welcome the fact that ward 10 has joined the Star Ward scheme which aims to improve the lives of patients, the 4 stars below the article imply it's already a 4 star ward.

This is misleading, unless of course, it's actually true! Surely not ???

While I have often published management statements (there's one on page 2), I very much doubt the Management Mag would publish any of my articles or my readers letters.

The same people who tried to censor "Sunrise News" and tried to ban this magazine after one issue are firmly in control of Locality News which is why it only publishes the management view. MIND put out Locality News and Mind Your Business every morning and nothing else. They call us biased and practice censorship by the back door. But they are puppets and we know who pulls their strings.

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