

Sunrise Safe? No Guarantee from SBC

Slough Freemasons have agreed to use their contacts in local government to prevent the closure of Sunrise Club. We welcome the intervention of such powerful allies and thank them for their support.

Fiona Mc Taggart MP has asked Jane Wood (Director of Adult Social Services) for an assurance on the future of Sunrise. We have seen a letter from Jane Wood which says Sunrise 'is safe' which I take as meaning 'will not close'. Thanks Fiona and Jane.

This does not exclude the possibility that it may be severely cut. In Bracknell for example the drop-in service was cut to half a day per week. To some extent our future is in our own hands, ultimately it will depend on what we decide to do with our personalisation budgets. No plan is needed to close Sunrise, it may just happen due to lack of money. Statements from Derek Oliver, Assistant Director and Susanna Yeoman, Locality Manager support this vision of the future.

The more of us who continue to support Sunrise with our budgets the bigger it will be. The more of us who decide to do something else instead the smaller it will be. If so many of us decide to go elsewhere that it is no longer economically viable for Mind or anyone else to run Sunrise, I would question how Jane intends to keep her promise. It is in the nature of personalisation that any service which fails to get enough customers and hence enough money will shrink away and possibly close. It is the free market, red in tooth and claw.

We have experimented with 'user led' schemes which have been less than successful, such as the 'user led kitchen'. However, there is another option, the 'user run'



scheme where we not only take the responsibilities but also take the power to decide how things are run. The New Horizons paid kitchen scheme was a popular one, it gave us the self esteem of being paid for our work and some degree of work experience.

I propose the following: that for one day a week we run the place ourselves. Five of us could volunteer to be 'staff' for the day and be paid the £20 therapeutic earnings limit for our work. Together with the rent for SADSAD which I understand to be £60 a day the total cost would be £160. I think a single day would be a realistic place to start, if it's successful maybe more. What if no-one volunteers? You might ask. Well people tend to be more keen to volunteer if cash is involved. At Reading Resource if no-one volunteers to run the café it just doesn't open that day. If the scheme works I predict a marked increase in the self esteem and confidence of those who actually run it.

Just an idea, could be interesting.

I welcome your feedback on this.

In light of the recent 'Sunrise is Safe' statement we need a clarification as to whether this means 'safe from closure' or 'safe from cuts and closure'. Is it safe from closure if Mind can no longer afford to run it? Do we have a guarantee of a minimum number of days it will run per week? The Bracknell drop-in runs for half a day a week, has (to the best of my knowledge) not closed and might be described as 'safe'.

In the months ahead we need to ask the right questions and make sure we get clear answers. It is also a time when the management are looking for ideas on how to make things better. What do I have to offer? You might ask yourself. Well many years on benefits can make you expert on getting value for money. Many years in the mental health system can give you an insight into what your fellow mentalists need. Being 'mad' and being 'stupid' are not the same thing. You don't have to be 'clever' to have a good idea.

The Way Forward

What has been done in the current Save Sunrise campaign cannot be overstated, and is remarkable. We have done this with less than 100 members on our side.

What could we achieve with the support of the 800 fellow mentalists on CMHT books or the estimated 3000 in all Slough?

I've seen some good thinking in this campaign and some well publicised actions, it has made me believe that more is possible. The question I ask myself is how do we reach our people beyond the day centres... Well, this paper will need to go beyond the daycentres and raise awareness of the website. Once the tribe are viewing the website we have 2 way communications. They can email us, we can reply and we can also raise awareness of various events, meetings, actions etc.

We'll need to get some links on other websites to our one, hand out some business cards to community mentalists and we'll see how it goes from there.

If the personalisation process can be delayed for long enough a new government may be elected and the scheme abandoned. I would think it might well take that long anyway as the management don't yet seem to have much idea how to do it.

Any attempt to remove drop-ins from the specification must be viewed with extreme suspicion and resisted.

If promises are broken here we propose a 'Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!' campaign that will make the events of the last month look like a Teddy Bears Picnic. If promises are kept then we'll be happy bunnies and no such action will be necessary.

Better to Say the Wrong Thing
and
Do the Right Thing
Than The Other Way Round
Herman H. Hamster

A Question of Stress

Many of us have experienced the stress of a DWP medical examination where we must prove ourselves incapable of work or lose our benefits. We face a similar stress in the forthcoming assessments for personalisation where we must prove our needs or lose our service.

Anxiety about losing something you've already got is far worse than the anxiety about not getting something you haven't got. Also the double uncertainty of each of us who use day services of not knowing whether we will have a service that meets our needs and not knowing if we will have a budget to pay for that service will cause more anxiety as time passes.

In the interests of our mental health the stress caused by the coming changes must be minimised.

I suggest the following: assess those in day services first, take away our uncertainty, let us know where we stand and give us time to plan for the future.

Www.SloughMental.co.uk - Word From The Website

At the bottom of our front page in red ink you'll find our website address. Everyone these days seems to have one but I don't think we've ever told you what ours does.

First of all it lets you read the Latest Issue, print it out etc, as you might expect. If you want to read last months issue you can click Back Issues which will let you read every Issue ever printed right back to Issue 1.

You can email letters, articles, photos to the editor :
editor@sloughmental.co.uk

If you have questions you want answered he meets regularly with the management in charge of mental health services and may be able to get answers for you. The more of you who write in and raise an issue, the more chance we've got of getting it changed.

The paper doesn't always come out on the same day every month so if you want one emailed to you as soon as it comes out send an email to:

subscriptions@sloughmental.co.uk

We also have a page of links to other useful websites: anything you think should be added to that list?

Suggestions welcome.

A new feature will shortly be added: this will be an events section.

Here you will find:

Social & Sporting events
Demonstrations & Actions
Various Meetings
Other Events

Questions and Answers

In the past few months we have asked many questions about our future and the answers we have had have ranged from I don't know to confusing waffle and conflicting answers from different officials of the council.

In order to clarify the truth behind the confusion I've decided to ask a number of clear questions in the remote hope of maybe getting a few clear answers.

Having examined the available evidence it is my view that the future of Sunrise cannot be guaranteed as it depends on our own actions and on the actions of people we may have never met. We are told it will share its budget with personalisation so the only way it will not lose income would be if personalisation takes no income from it (which would mean the total failure of personalisation).

Have a look at the questions and see what you think the answers are.

If anyone can give me a convincing argument that what I've said is wrong I'll be happy to print it.

Derek Oliver and Susanna Yeoman agree with me that there can be no guarantees on Sunrise, but others who have said it is 'safe' are being less than helpful.

Open Letter To Jane Wood, Director of Adult Social Services, SBC

To

Jane Wood
Director of Adult Social Services
Slough Borough Council

Dear Jane,

Thank you for your response to Fiona McTaggart's letter on the subject of Sunrise Club. In this letter you say 'Sunrise is safe'. Your Assistant Director Derek Oliver and your Locality Manager Susanna Yeoman have both made statements before witnesses (and some in writing) that the future of Sunrise is not guaranteed. There is a discrepancy here and we need clarification as to your definition of 'safe'.

I realise you're a busy woman and perhaps do not have time to answer the emails of mere 'users' like myself so I'll keep it short and simple:

It is my belief that by 'is safe' you mean 'will not close'... this does not guarantee it will not be severely cut as has happened in Windsor, Maidenhead and Bracknell leaving 1 day or less of drop-in service in all cases. I think we both know that personalisation is 'The Free Market, Red in Tooth and Claw' and that no service can survive without our support and the money from our personalisation budgets, so it isn't really possible to guarantee the future of Sunrise while it shares a budget with personalisation.

Is my analysis correct? A simple Yes will do fine.

If I'm wrong, a written guarantee that there will be no further cuts to Sunrise Club's budget, days of service, opening hours or staffing would be even better.

Should you fail to reply we will all be wondering why...

Kind Regards,

Danny Savage
Editor Slough Mental Health News

Management Replies to both Letters on Next Page

Questions Emailed To Mike Bibby

Assistant Director - Personalisation, Commissioning & Partnerships

Dear Mike,

When you came to visit Sunrise Club to talk about personalisation I asked if I could email you a few questions on personalisation and you agreed, so here they are.

1. If the number of people qualifying for day service remains at 100 with a fixed total budget of £170,000 a year the average annual payment will be £1,700 per person. If after the assessment of over 800 people on CMHT and MIND's books we find we have 200 people qualifying for day service but still only £170,000 budget the average annual payment would have to be reduced to £850 per person.

a) True

b) False

2. With 200 people, if someone needs £1700 to meet their needs and is only given £850 because the budget is fixed then that persons needs are unlikely to be met.

a) True

b) False

3. With 200 people, if you don't pay people half the amount you will run out of money before you run out of people and the needs of some people will not be met at all.

a) True

b) False

4. The Sunrise Club runs 5 days a week 4 days drop-in and 1 day in the community, has 5 staff and runs from 10am to 3pm (5 hours), therefore if 20% of its income is lost it will have to lose at least a day of service or an hour off opening hour or a member of staff.

a) True

b) False

5. Out of the 100 or so people on Sunrise Club's books we see between 20 or 30 a day, maybe 40-50 who can be described as regulars. People who don't come very often are more likely to give up altogether and take the money instead. This could easily mean a 50 to 60% loss of income.

a) True

b) False

6. 60% loss of income could result in a 3 day cut in the service reducing it to say 1 day drop-in, 1 day in community or a 3 hour reduction of opening hours to 10am - 12 pm.

a) True

b) False

7. While those who are offered a budget of a few pounds a week may not think it worth their while to take the money, those who are offered thousands a year will probably be much more interested (wouldn't you be). So Sunrise may well lose its wealthiest customers who will have a disproportionate effect on it's budget causing much more damage than several customers with lower budgets.

a) True

b) False

8. Personalisation is 'The Free Market Red in Tooth and Claw', it is 'A Rollercoaster Where You Can't See The Track', whatever we say or do, whatever anyone says or does once we're on that rollercoaster the one thing that makes a difference is where the budget money goes. That depends on what an unknown number of unknown people decide to spend their unknown budgets on. If we decide to spend our money on holidays or the gym or yoga lessons or whatever Sunrise will lose income and almost certainly be cut if not shut. This will happen because we will make the market make it happen without realising or understanding what we do, no plan is needed to cut or shut Sunrise, it is a business and businesses without enough cash and customers go out of business, this is the nature of the free market model.

a) True

b) False

I'm not sure if you can or will reply to this but perhaps it will help you understand why assurances that 'There is no plan at this time to close Sunrise' are quite meaningless to us. The point is there doesn't need to be a plan. Once Sunrise and Personalisation are fighting for the budget that once belonged only to Sunrise the only way Sunrise doesn't lose income is if personalisation doesn't take it from them (i.e. It fails completely). You have put two dogs in one cage with enough food for only one, they will fight for survival and one may die or both may be half starved, sounds like a plan to save money. If you did this to real dogs you could be prosecuted, but these are just mental health services so the RSPCA are powerless to stop you. When I say 'YOU' I realise that you are probably just obeying orders and it's nothing personal, but your masters are playing dice with the lives of my people and they have suffered enough.

Kind Regards, Danny Savage, Editor Slough Mental Health News

A school kid with GCSE maths and a bit of common sense could answer these questions, maybe you could.
But what about an Assistant Director of Slough Borough Council?

Reply From Mike Bibby - Personalisation Manager

Dear Danny – thank you for your e-mail.

I did agree to answer questions where possible, but am unable to give simple true/false responses to those listed below.

You will appreciate that allocation of personal budgets is based on individual assessments relating to specific needs, and the issues are both more complex and more subtle than your questions imply.

As a member of the project group involved in the review of mental health day services it is more appropriate to raise your questions in that forum or at the regular open forum for users where more full discussion can take place.

I hope you will take those opportunities to raise these matters.

Regards

Mike Bibby, Assistant Director - Personalisation, Commissioning & Partnerships, Slough Borough Council

Reply From Mike Bibby on behalf of Jane Wood

Dear Danny

I am responding on behalf of Jane Wood to your e-mail to her on 28th October entitled How Safe?

Thank you for your e-mail concerning the Sunrise Club. I hope I can clarify some issues relating to the future of mental health day services and the review we are currently undertaking and answer your specific questions.

I understand that you are a member of the project group which is working to review our current day service provision. Whilst I am happy to respond to your e-mail on this occasion I must ask that in the future you raise any questions you have concerning the review in the project group meetings as that is the most appropriate forum. I am sure you will also appreciate that neither I nor other senior managers can engage in lengthy exchanges on specific points concerning the review when such a forum exists for that purpose.

I can confirm that there are no plans to reduce the amount of funding as a whole being made available to fund mental health day care in Slough. The review currently underway is not a 'cuts' exercise, but it is seeking to offer a broader choice of support options for service users.

In terms of background and context, you are no doubt aware that in 2007 Mental Health Services started to look at developing day opportunities for people who use existing services and for those who do not meet the fair access to care eligibility relating to adult social care services. The review was particularly mindful that the current service does not represent the wishes and needs of all services users in receipt of secondary mental health services, and that this, combined with changes in National Policy, provided the opportunity to consult on ways in which local day services could be improved and developed. The review consisted of over 20 consultation events with service users, carers and other stakeholders, and provided the opportunity for service users to be members of the working group.

The outcome of the review identified that a range of new day opportunities are required, to assist and support people with long term mental health needs to access leisure, vocational and other services within the town. Importantly these new opportunities should be provided *in addition* to a safe place or drop-in service.

In recent months the recommendations arising out of the 2007 review have been revisited, and the existing contract with MIND extended to enable services to be developed at an appropriate pace.

With regard to personalisation, you will also be aware that during the past 2 years we have increased opportunities for users of mental health services to access a range of local services and facilities. Initiatives that have been developed include an active bowling group, well attended IT courses specifically tailored for people with mental health needs provided through the Thomas Gray Centre, a mental health football club, fishing group and cricket group. These opportunities have been made available as a direct result of feedback from service users, and the majority are funded by service users exercising their choice through direct payments. Such individualised support has already provided many benefits for service users in Slough.

An aim of the current review is to further extend the range of opportunities for individualised support, and to increase the choice available to service users through direct payments and individual budgets for those service users that wish to take up these opportunities.

The service specification and related tender process which will result from the current review will aim to deliver these opportunities whilst, at the same time, reflecting the need for a 'safe place' or drop-in facility for those people for whom this is the most appropriate support.

As you know, service users are involved in the project group and we will also be undertaking individual reviews of service users to identify their needs and preferences so that we can ensure that future service provision meets these needs in the most appropriate ways.

I appreciate that change and the possibility of change, will cause anxiety and I am aware that some of the service users attending the Sunrise Club are particularly concerned that Slough retains a drop-in or day service facility specifically for people with mental health needs. I wish to provide a reassurance again that there are no plans to cease such a facility in Slough, and we do not envisage such a service being 'severely cut' in the way you describe has happened in other local authority areas.

I trust this response does provide clarification on the issues you raise and provide reassurances about the continued levels of funding for mental health day care and our commitment to retain drop-in facilities whilst also seeking to ensure a wider range of opportunities for all users of mental health services in Slough

Mike Bibby

Assistant Director - Personalisation, Commissioning & Partnerships

Langley Drop-in Safe Says Berks NHS Boss



Philippa Slinger

This from our reporter at the Sunrise Club, where Philippa Slinger, Chief Executive Officer of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust and Gerry Crawford, Assistant Director of Operations were invited to the members meeting of October 14th.

When asked whether Berkshire NHS had any plans to apply the personalisation model to the Langley drop-in, Philippa and Gerry both confirmed that there were no such plans. The Langley drop-in is funded by the Assertive Outreach team which is NHS not council and is not subject to the same control as Slough Council's social services.

It was worth asking this question as a few years ago when we were removed from New Horizons there was also an attempt to close Langley Drop-in.

However both these high ranking officers of the Trust seem to think the Langley drop-in is useful and a good idea. If only our local and national politicians had such wisdom and foresight about places like Sunrise. Perhaps one day they'll learn from their mistakes.

They also explained how they now had to consider the choice between Upton Hospital and Prospect Park as the main psychiatric unit in the light of the current economic depression. Upton Park would be more central with better transport links but expensive to build. Prospect Park has already been built but has transport problems.

More news on this as it breaks.

I don't like Liars,
I don't like Cheats,
I don't like Bullshitters...

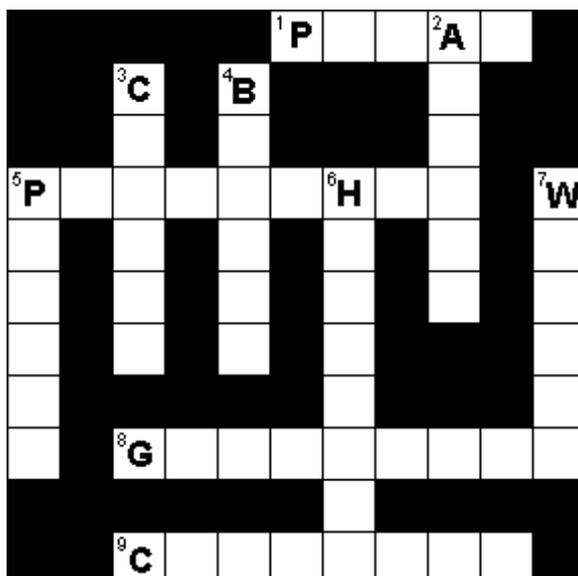
Sir Alan Sugar

The day after tomorrow is
the third day of the rest of
your life.

George Carlin

He who throws
Tigers among the Pigeons
Cannot be surprised
When they fly
In all directions.
One thing is certain,
They will not stand still.

Prize Crossword



This month it's a nuts crossword, all the answers are nuts except 5 down which is really a member of the pea family used in the manufacture of dynamite. Most of these nuts are available in your local supermarket except maybe 8 across.

No clues here, except you've got the first letter of each nut.

First correct solution wins a bag of nuts.

NEXT OPEN FORUM Mental Health Services

Thomas Gray Centre
Queens Road
Slough
SL1 3QW

Friday November 27
11am - 12.00pm

All service users and carers are invited to attend a sub-group of the monthly LIT meeting. This is a chance to hear up-dates on mental health services and feedback to a member of the senior management team from New Horizons.

Refreshments Provided

For further information, please call Allison Nealon or Nicola Miles on 01753 477027

The important thing is to take that first step. Bravely overcoming one small fear gives you the courage to take on the next.

Daisaku Ikeda

