

An Ass-Salt On Our Legal Rights !

For those of you who were not there, let me tell you the story of the elections to the Day Service Tender Selection Committee of February 8th. For some strange and thus far unexplained reason the subject of the meeting was a closely guarded secret for 4 days. When questioned what the meeting was about Sunrise Unit Manager, Laura said she'd tell us on the day, when asked why she couldn't tell us she claimed she didn't know all the facts. Not knowing that there was an election meant there could be no campaigning, no discussion of the issues no party political broadcasts. It was a case of who wants to stand, ok lets vote. No General Election, Local Election or any other election could be run in this way without someone calling foul.

Let me first describe the events of Mondays emergency members meeting, Laura announced that someone had poured salt into her coat pocket and that both her mobile phones were not working. She then said that because no-one had owned up she was going to charge the phone repairs and the cost of cleaning her coat to the members fund and she hoped whoever'd done it was proud of themselves. She further stated that if we weren't prepared to behave like adults she'd have to treat us like children.

Firstly, although salt water can destroy electrical goods, dry powdered salt is unlikely to cause any damage even if it were able to penetrate the phones casing. Secondly if I had a pocketful of salt I would simply clean it out with a vacuum cleaner. Thirdly if police were investigating this act of vandalism or any other crime they would question everyone

who was in the building at the time and not just assume that only the mentally ill people in the building could have done it. Fourthly, this sort of discrimination is possibly illegal under the Disability Discrimination Act.



Fifthly, no criminal suspect can be fined or imprisoned without evidence and a fair trial, what was proposed here is that we be collectively fined by way of the members fund without trial or evidence, which is contrary to the laws of England in that suspects are innocent until proved guilty. In this sense we've been treated worse than common criminals.

Now it must be emphasized that the salty pocket incident was raised before we voted, creating an atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia which could well have affected the vote. It is sadly a pattern at Sunrise that any protest tends to result in a punishment and not an attempt to understand the problem.

For example when Nigel complained at the LIT meeting about the lack of meals he says he was told off for it in front of the other Sunrise members, he then protested about Laura bullying him at the open forum. We then have this strange and irregular handling of the election. An election that was sexist because it would not allow two women or two men to be elected on their merits but disqualified one of them from office on grounds of gender. After I raised the issue of the salty pocket Laura mentioned in a members meeting that 'someone' (meaning me) had said that a member who was recently burgled by armed robbers 'Shouldn't have boasted about his gadgets' and added 'That wasn't very nice'. Not only could this be considered to be spreading malicious gossip and rumours contrary to the rules of the Sunrise Club but it may also have given a poor traumatised individual the idea that someone in the room didn't like him. Was that doing him a favour? I don't think so. This was, in my view, an obvious 'punishment' for my standing up for my members on the salty pocket incident, insensitive and inappropriate in every way.

According to the minutes of a recent members meeting Julia Smith (East Berks Mind) accused someone of calling Laura a thief.

Well if someone tells you they're going to take your money without your permission what are you supposed to think?

Did we have any reason to think Laura was not telling the truth?

Are we supposed to take our unit managers announcements with a pinch of salt?

The Article Below Was The Original Front Page For This Issue

Moved to Page 2 by Recent Events

Sunrise To Stay On Australia Day

On Australia Day January 26th 2010 the news was announced that Sunrise staff Laura and Rosa would continue to run Sunrise Club after March 31st and the end of East Berkshire Mind.

The story continues at the Open Forum, January 29th 2010:

Reporter: Danny Savage
Management Representative: Susanna Yeoman,
Locality Manager

I put the following questions:

Q. Regarding the Temporary Management of Sunrise from April 1st until a permanent management is chosen: is Rethink 'Last Man Standing'.

A. We have placed adverts in the press and will be approaching the following service providers for expressions of interest: Rethink, Together, Turnstone, Richmond Fellowship and Comfort Care. (Since this meeting 2 further contenders have been added to the list, namely Ability and Reach bringing the total number to 7 so far.)

Q. If a new service provider cannot be found will the Slough Council run the service itself?

A. Yes.

Q. What will be the budget for the interim service?

A. The current budget of about £174000 for a 1 year contract will be maintained. Although the new service provider may be chosen as early as September a 1 year contract allows for unforeseen delays and will be more attractive to service providers. Our aim is for as much stability as possible in the interim period.



The issue of food at Sunrise club was raised, Nigel described how food was not always available and stock control measures to ensure sufficient food was in the fridge for the next day and monitoring sell by dates were inadequate. He also complained that when he raised the issue of food at Sunrise at a LIT meeting he was publicly told off by Laura (Unit Manager) in front of all the other Sunrise members (which I think perhaps contravenes the Rules of Sunrise Club agreed to by staff and members). He claimed this was a case of bullying at which point a further point was raised by Wayne of Slough Links that 'wasn't there any service monitoring going on to stop these things from happening?'.

I confirmed that there was a Service Management Review Group in the current contract for this purpose but I was informed it had never met.

The meeting closed as time was now up and the story continues at the January 29th LIT meeting:

I raised the issue of the Service Management Review Group at the LIT meeting, as an idea whose time had come, especially in the approaching time of rapid change: 'As our boat heads into the fast moving waters of change we need to keep a firm hand on the rudder.' Nigel supported me on this. It was agreed that such monitoring would be a good idea and Susanna said she would look into it. I have now received an email from Susanna confirming that she will tell the contracts team to include it in future contracts and that it will be enacted in full.

If you are wondering what all this means to you let me tell you that we will have at least one representative on this committee, they will be able to put your views to the management - they will be your voice, they will listen to the management's plans for the future - they will be your ears. I'm not saying that we've taken over the asylum but we will hear and be heard. Time will tell if they'll listen to what we say but to my mind anything that sweeps away the veil of secrecy and the fog of poor communications is a good thing.

Nigel raised the issue of Sunrise and the fact we still have no guarantee that it will survive in its current form.

I put it to the LIT that with a fixed budget shared between personalisation and Sunrise there was only one way that the Sunrise budget would not be cut and that that was if not a penny was spent on personalisation - for example £50000 more for personalisation would mean £50000 less for the Sunrise - it was simple maths. Nobody argued with my point.

Other News from the LIT Meeting

Mystery Meeting Report

There was some discussion on the Upton Hospital psychiatric unit issue and Nigel raised the point that the 25 mile journey from Slough to Reading would either cause considerable hardship to visitors in terms of travelling costs and inconvenience or considerable cost to the trust in providing free transport. I agreed with Nigel that we needed a psychiatric unit in Slough, we'd all said so in an expensive public consultation and Reading was not an acceptable alternative.

The Carers Group announced a respite scheme for carers, those interested can contact Anita on 01628669708.

Also a Mental Health Coffee Morning for Carers at New Horizons 10 - 11.30am on the 1st Wednesday of the Month.

CMHT Operational Report:

1. Times is hard - budgetary constraints from NHS and Council
2. Reduced service maintained through snowy spell.
3. Two new social workers and one new nurse recruited.
4. One new social worker and one new nurse to be recruited.
5. High level of referrals
6. New consultant psychiatrist recruited, Dr Hegedy.
7. Nicky Holmes quits as manager of Wexham Parks Ward 10, takes new job at Heatherwood. Katalyn Walsby appointed interim manager as of February 1st, permanent manager (name to be announced) will take over as of March 1st 2010.

A mystery meeting was held on Monday February 8th - no one was told what it was about until it started. The purpose of that meeting was to elect representatives to attend the meetings with the 17 service providers who have now expressed an interest in the Sunrise interim service contract. The two candidates elected were Louise Yates and our editor Danny Savage.

First meeting Wednesday February 10th, we'll see what these guys have to say and report back to you.

Watch this space.

**If you can't take the Heat,
Don't tickle the Dragon.**

Update on BMHUG Funds

In the December Issue we covered the story of how much was left in the SMHUG and BMHUG accounts. We reported SMHUG funds as £4454.17 when they folded rising to £5380.66 when a cheque for £926.49 was returned uncashed. I've now received an update from the treasurer regarding the details of that cheque. It was a cheque from SMHUG to BMHUG and was returned only because BMHUG didn't have a bank account. Now that they have a bank account the cheque has been paid to them, and the total fund ringfenced for Slough is £4454.17.

**Power To The People,
By The People,
Of The People,
Victory is Ours.**

**Naveed,
Australia Day 2010**

New West Wing to be Built In Central Slough

As you may remember, when the Day Service Project Group was considering possible venues for a mental health daycentre, the West Wing was first on the List.

In those days it was the grim and rather unsuitable Arbour Vale site threatened with demolition, which we denounced in a 2 page article titled 'The West Wing - Why Not'.

Later we published some council cabinet minutes which revealed that the existing Stoke Road West Wing would either be demolished to make way for housing and a football stadium and rebuilt elsewhere or left as it is.

It has now been revealed in the local papers that a new purpose built West Wing will be built as part of the 'Learning Curve' building along with a new library and other facilities in central Slough.

As a new West Wing is to be built, there will no longer be a need for the old one on the Arbour Vale site and it will in all probability now be demolished.

Unless the Council plans to house a mental health drop-in in a state-of-the-art, brand spanking new arts and learning centre in the centre of Slough we can be pretty sure the West Wing is now off the list.

The top venue on the list is now SADSAD, Northern Road. Number 2 on the list is New Horizons, Pursers Court. The other venues weren't even close but we may be visiting some new & refurbished buildings in future.

Side Effects of Lithium - Psoriasis



On Lithium

Lithium Carbonate under it's various trade names such as Priadel, Delandale, Liskonum, Camcolit and Norgine is a common mood stabiliser for Manic Depression or Bipolar Affective Disorder. It can be very effective and has kept me off the ward for many years but has a number of possible side effects one of which is skin disorders such as psoriasis. The photo above is a microscope close up of the back of my hand when I was on Lithium. The white dandruff like flakes are the result of the skin growing faster than the flakes of dead skin can fall off. Ordinary psoriasis has no cure although it can disappear by itself for no apparent reason.

Lithium aggravated psoriasis improves when you reduce the dose of Lithium or switch to another medication. The picture on the right shows the same area of skin after switching to Valproate.

My GP who can't have been too familiar with the side effects of psychiatric medication advised me that psoriasis was incurable,

all he could do was give me some ointment and that switching medication would be hazardous.

I checked on the internet for information on Lithium and psoriasis and found that the condition often improves when you come off Lithium. By then my skin was a horror story, I'd not wear shorts for fear of being mistaken for a leper and was getting pretty depressed about it. I decided it was worth the risk of a relapse to get rid of this nasty side effect and the other nasty side effect of feeling really tired most of the time. I found a report from the American Association of Medicine and Psychiatry from their website:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2644475/>

The most relevant section:

Psoriasis induced or exacerbated by lithium could be managed with conventional treatment methods such as topical steroids, keratolytics, vitamin D analogues, oral retinoids, PUVA (psoralen and ultraviolet A) therapy, and methotrexate. However, in most cases these treatments may not be very effective, and in such resistant cases, lithium discontinuation may be considered and the patient may be switched to another mood stabilizer. Reduction in dose is another reasonable option and is worth trying.

The psoriatic lesions generally disappear within a few months' time after discontinuation of lithium treatment.



Off Lithium

I went to see my GP and knowing the facts was able to get an appointment with a consultant and slowly increase my dose of Valproate to a working dose before slowly reducing the Lithium to zero. There was no relapse, no side effects, my hair could have fallen out (rare side effect) but I got lucky. The psoriasis and the tiredness are both fading away.

Of course not everybody gets the same side effects as everyone else so what worked for me might not work for you. But sometimes there are so many side effects that you begin to wonder what makes your life more miserable, your condition or your medication. When things are this bad perhaps it's time for a change of medication.

I tell this story to give hope to those who may be suffering these symptoms unnecessarily and to show them there is a way out.

If anyone else has medication horror stories especially with happy endings please send them to editor@sloughmental.co.uk.

**Before
'Care in The Community'
Can work
THE COMMUNITY
Must actually
CARE**

**Before
'Social Inclusion'
Can work
SOCIETY
Must want
To INCLUDE us**

**In Slough
The Bullshit
Piled So High
You Needed
Wings
To Stay Above It**

CREATIVE WRITING WANTED January - April 2010

Send us poetry, lines & story on the theme of 'my life'

For selected writers we offer

- Feedback and support
- The chance to be included in a book and performances
- An opportunity to share stories and provide inspiration for others

This project is open to people in Berkshire who have experienced conditions resulting from life's challenges and traumas and have used mental health support services

For more project information or submissions:
email: writing@companyparadiso.co.uk
c/o 48 Brisbane Rd, Reading RG30 2PE

Company Paradiso Productions is an Arts Charity that works in partnership with social care services and broadcasters, see companyparadiso.co.uk.

Postcard by Ellie Warner, project participant

COMPANY
PARADISO
PRODUCTIONS

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

THAMES VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP
Working for safer communities

Reading
Berkshire Council

My Mind.
A dark room
Where negatives
are developed.



Mad March Mouse

Boring, boring, boring, I snooze through life a snoring.
Will they notice when I'm dead?
What I wonder will be said?
He lived, he died, he left no mark.
Just like a fat black cat he was, who snuffed it in the dark.

Shall I sleep or shall I weep ?
Or shall I go 'Eeep, eep, eep, eep' ?
Like some mad mouse who thought too deep
Until his brain felt so much pain
They put him in the teapot again.

Soon men in coats of white will come, they'll jab a needle in my bum
They'll take me to the Happy House
And there I'll sleep and there I'll weep
And laugh and go 'Eep, eep, eep, eep!'
Just like a Mad March Mouse.

Mr Jolly

The Mystery Meeting Poem

I once went to a meeting
It was a Mister E
Nobody knew what twas about
Not you nor neither me...

The manager she knew the score
But wouldn't say a thing.
We sat there waiting, what a bore
Oh ding-aling-aling...

DD

Writers Group Cancelled

There might have been a few more poems here but someone cancelled the writers group. It was known at the beginning of the week that CMHT would be running Sunrise for the week and yet it was cancelled.

East Berkshire Mind
That Was Unkind

Keep Fit Cancelled

WHY?

Members Meeting Cancelled?

Some think we should be seen
and not heard for we are like
children.

To them I say

You Have Failed

The Meeting Was
Un-Cancelled and
Held

Written A Poem?

Want it Published in SMH News
And our website

Send it to

Editor@sloughmental.co.uk

Warriors of Rising Sun... Forging A New Image

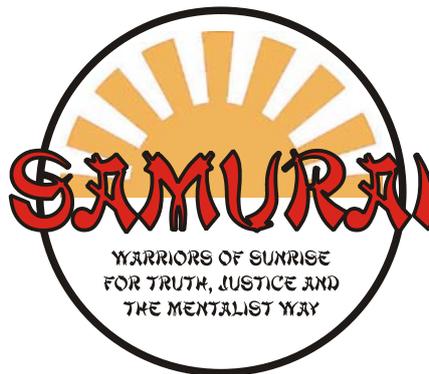
Every now and then there's a new idea for a group name for the mentalist movement of Slough. First there was SMHUG. Then there was US. Now we bring you Slough And Municipal Union for the Representation and Advancement of Interesting thinkers - or SAMURAI for short.

The Samurai were Warriors of the Rising Sun, we are Warriors of Sunrise. They were rough tough kung fu b*stards who fought when they had to, yet in times of peace they administered justice with a code of honour.

I have always found 'Service User' to be mealy mouthed meaningless managementspeak that makes you feel small and irrelevant. Far better for one's self esteem to walk into a meeting and say 'Joe Bloggs, Samurai' than 'Joe Bloggs, Service User'.

Above all I think we need something that's fun, catchy and dynamic, too many mentalist groups fail to take off because they fail to inspire or grab the interest of their would be supporters. The phrase Mental Health User Group does not make for catchy names - would you rather be a MHUG or a SAMURAI.

Here's a Logo:



The Sunrise Action Group might never have started had Nigel not taken the first step. But once the ball started rolling Carol and many others played key roles in its success. It was about many people doing many things in a common cause. It was not about committees and meetings but about actions and involving the members. It also showed us that not every 'normal' person was against us and we do have friends in unexpected places. This is the way, these skills forged in battle will vital in peace.

If SAMURAI is to replace anything then it seeks to replace SMHUG as umbrella mentalist movement for Slough. Movements are not built overnight but in the meantime where mentalists go to meetings and don't want to call themselves 'service user' they may call themselves SAMURAI.

Report From The Day Service Tender Selection Committee

The closing date for tenders to run Sloughs mental health day services was 12 noon Wednesday 24th February 2010.

The maximum budget is £170,000.

If Rosa and Laura are still employees of East Berkshire Mind and still wish to run Sunrise on April 1st 2010 they will be allowed to do so under TUPE employment protection law.

The committee will compile a shortlist of the best service providers using a rating system and those on the list will visit Sunrise.

The Sunrise location at SADSAD, Northern Road will continue to be the base for day services for the one year period of the interim contract.

The interim contract will be much the same as the EB Mind contract and the aim for the next year will be as much stability as possible.

When the interim contract is over a permanent service provider will be chosen and the service may start to change to include new ideas like personalisation. The future is unwritten, we have no crystal balls, we must be clear about what we want and campaign hard if we are ever to achieve it.

Over 20 Service providers expressed an interest in running the service and if none of them prove suitable Slough Borough Council will run the service itself.

It was agreed that we will be notified of the names of the service providers who have tendered for the service. I have not yet received the list but will let you know when I do.

Questions and Answers - Susanna Yeoman

You may remember that prior to the Selection Committee Meeting, Louise and myself took down your questions for the committee. We didn't get the chance to question the service providers but I emailed Susanna Yeoman your questions. Her answers are shown in red.

Firstly the meals issue is still prominent, you might say that at Sunrise 'FOOD' is a four letter word.

No plans to change current arrangements at this stage.

It was felt that insufficient notice was given to prepare for the election of representatives and insufficient time for members to consider what they wanted from the service.

Unfortunately we are working to exceptionally tight timescales due to the legal regulations governing the process, and therefore there was very little time available.

The issue of whether service providers had a centre based or community based option was considered highly important, we were advised by the membership to express our well known preference for a centre based service. **This message has been heard and the providers have been informed that there should be no changes for the interim provision**

There was concern that members without care managers might not be eligible for direct payments and personalisation.

It is true that, as has always been the case, direct payments (and in the future personal budgets) are available in relation to assessed need.

Lack of communication: it was felt that the refusal to say what the meeting was about until the meeting started was unhelpful, caused anxiety, and was inexplicable. We were unsure whose idea it was to keep the subject of the meeting secret or why it had been done.

Do you mean the provider meeting? I am sorry if it felt as tho there was insufficient information, I thought I was clear that the purpose of the meeting was about us providing info to potential bidders, however limited time may have meant that this info did not get widely circulated.

The issue of staffing was raised, as before members wished that existing staff be kept on, though this of course is covered by TUPE regulations.

Correct, it is clear that TUPE applies and that the two existing staff members have the right to transfer to the new provider

There was a call for more service user representatives, the practice of picking 1 male and 1 female representative was criticised, it was felt that representatives should be elected on merit rather than gender. I myself would have no problem with 2 men or 2 women representing us provided they were the best people for the job or got the most votes. The issue was raised that the voting arrangements meant that myself and Nigel could not both be elected even if we got the most and second most votes and that in this way the result was 'rigged'.

I do not think it would be beneficial to have more than two reps involved in the interim part of the process. Having seen the process by which members were elected I am assured that the process was fair. I am delighted to have Louise and Danny involved and convinced that both will make a very good contribution to reflect the needs and wishes of the service user group.

There was a call for more outings.

This could be discussed with the new provider once in place

There was an interest in what changes the new service provider would like to make.

As mentioned, the objective is to maintain continuity and stability at this stage

There was a call for a centre with a larger number of rooms.

No change is anticipated to the centre base at this stage.

The issue of fairness was raised, perhaps a reference to recent events.

The tender process is governed by strict regulations and therefore I don't have any doubt that it will achieve a fair outcome

Unfortunately we didn't get an answer to the communication question due to a failure of communications, I have rephrased the question and await an answer - watch this space.

Fascinating Facts

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

Your body creates and kills 15 million red blood cells per second!

Tourists visiting Iceland should know that tipping at a restaurant is considered an insult!

Until the nineteenth century, solid blocks of tea were used as money in Siberia!

A lightning bolt generates temperatures five times hotter than those found at the sun's surface!

The two-foot long bird called a Kea that lives in New Zealand likes to eat the strips of rubber around car windows!

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

The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds!

Windmills always turn anti-clockwise. Except for the windmills in Ireland!

It's against the law to pawn your dentures in Las Vegas!

It's illegal to burp, or sneeze in a certain church in Omaha, Nebraska!

In Natoma, Kansas, it's illegal to throw knives at men wearing striped suits.

**Ding - Dong,
The Witch Is Dead!**

The Wizard of Oz

**December's
Mystery Cat Name:**

TOM

Cryptic Gooseword



**Soak An Ogre Goo?
(anagram)
8,5**

'If I'm Not Me
Then
Who The Hell
Am I?'

Doug Quaid

**Like a fish,
One should look
For holes in the net.**

**GOT ANY
NEWS**

VIEWS

POEMS

PHOTOS

PUZZLES

GEESE

**ANYTHING ELSE
ON YOUR MIND**

SEND IT TO

editor@sloughmental.co.uk

**And we'll tell the world.
(Or some of it anyway)**

NEXT OPEN FORUM

**Thomas Grey Centre
Friday March 26th, 11am**

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