



A New Beginning - Enter The SUMO !

Know ye now of times long past and shrouded in the mists of legendry... It is December in the Year of Our Lord 2004 and East Berkshire Mind have just signed a contract for the New Horizons service. Despite assurances that SMHUG would be key stakeholders in the service they were not given copies of the contract. I took a journalistic interest as to why.

In December 2008 thanks to the actions of the late, great Mike Paxton we got a copy of the contract and discovered something called the Service Review Group.

As the name suggests this group was supposed to meet to review the service (every 6 months).

Members of the group:

The Locality Manager, The Joint Commissioning & Development Manager (Mental Health), The Contracts Manager Slough Borough Council, Service User Representative / Advocate, Mind's Representative.

Until today no service user had ever sat on that group. The management have said that the group had never met and seeing how far Mind had strayed from the contract it seems quite possible this might be true.

So much for the history lesson. Moving forward to more recent times I suggested that as our boat enters the fast flowing waters of change, we need to keep a firm hand on the rudder and the service review group was an idea whose time had come. Susanna Yeoman agreed and allowed us 2 representatives on the group as she did with the Service Provider Selection Group.



So to the present day (or the Wednesday before last anyway):

Seven Sunrise members stood for the Service Review Group and two names were to be drawn from a hat.

We had elected our reps in the past and seeing the 'hat trick' as a step backwards I decided to organise a 'right to vote' campaign.

On the day I explained my objections to Madeline Jones of Ability and it was agreed that the issue would be debated and a vote taken on whether to vote or not.

Sunrise members voted for the vote and Ability organised an election.

Louise, who's on the Service Provider Selection Group with me and a key figure in the 'right to vote' campaign was elected along with Joyce, former member of the New Horizons steering committee and leading member of the original Sunrise Committee. The members of Sunrise have chosen well and proved that democracy is better than the throw of a dice.

So to the Future:

Seven members volunteered to represent Sunrise, two were chosen, but it doesn't have to end there:

In my election speech to my fellow members I invited all the other candidates, win or lose, to join me in a Union to represent the interests of Sunrise and its members. Some members who didn't stand for election have expressed an interest: to them I say welcome - the more the merrier.

There will be times when our representatives may not be able to attend their meetings through illness or other reasons. When this happens our other representatives can stand in for them.

Those who want to be involved in meetings and consultations can practise asking questions at the monthly Open Forums, moving on to LIT meetings when they feel more confident.

We'll hold monthly meetings at Sunrise where issues may be raised and questions asked and these can then be passed on to the Open Forum and the LIT. So the shy amongst us can have their questions asked at the LIT without setting foot in the town hall.

**A MEETING WILL BE HELD
At Sunrise, 1pm Friday 9th July
To Discuss The Details**

Brave New World... From this day forward, whoever shall treat us unjustly must wrestle the SUMO.

What is to be done? Some Ideas...

Once we have our own union, we should elect our own representatives, count our own votes and operate independently from Slough Borough Council, CMHT, Ability and all other statutory and voluntary bodies, exercising self-determination as described in the service specification.

The successful campaigning of the Sunrise Action Group shows us that when we act together as a group we can achieve greater things than when the heroes amongst us pull their underpants over their trousers and boldly go into battle single handed. As my friend Crazy Horse once said 'Tribe without chiefs wanders plains like lost buffalo... Chiefs without tribe just men with big feathers in hat'.

So tribe shall meet monthly or maybe fortnightly to smoke pipe of peace and discuss important issues of day (we don't actually have a 'pipe of peace' nor is it our policy to encourage non-smokers to smoke).

Apart from regular meetings like the Open Forum and the LIT there will be other committees we'll need representatives for and plenty of meetings and consultations about Next Generation Healthcare and the Upton or Prospect Park hospital issue. With our own union we can make sure our voice is heard at these meetings and if one of our representatives is unable to attend a meeting for some reason another can stand in for them.

Truth, Justice, Democracy and the Mentalist Way:

We shall seek the truth so our members shall know it. Ignorance is bliss but the results of ignorance are usually not good and a world of hurt.

We shall seek justice so our members are treated no worse than other groups in the community and not discriminated against.

We shall have meetings open to all members, where all may make a contribution, one member one vote and our representatives shall take the views of the members with them. We must not forget that a representative who does not represent the views of their members is an unrepresentative representative and the management will use this to their advantage. A representative is the voice of their members but the support of the members is the strength of the representative. In the 'right to vote' campaign all my courage and determination would have come to nothing without the support of my fellow members.

Let's keep it local:

You may notice on the SUMO logo it says Branch 001 Sunrise, I propose that we meet at Sunrise and discuss issues of importance to us. If people at New Horizons and other centres wish to form their own branches they should be encouraged and helped to do so. We can then hold meetings on our home ground where we feel comfortable and co-operate with other branches on issues of common interest.

Links with other branches or centres may be strengthened through social and sporting events, football, pool and table tennis are a few things that come to mind and of course Sunrise is a sports club with equipment for many other sports.

The future beyond April 2011 may be a time of great change, we must make sure that any changes do not make life worse for us and hopefully change it for the better. We must have a strong voice which leaves the management in no doubt as to what we want and don't want.

There will be times when we can use logic and common sense to get our views across to the management but there will be other times when we have to say 'this is not a good idea because our members won't like it.' At times like this a members vote will strengthen our negotiating position.

The Slough Mental Health News will continue to support and promote SUMO as will its website sloughmental.co.uk. Events and minutes of meetings will be posted on the website.

So I've put out a few ideas here but your ideas are equally welcome so bring them along to the meeting.

First Meeting of the Slough Union for the Mentally Outstanding - SUMO

**Sunrise Club
1.00pm
Friday 9th July**

Poets (and Fluffy Ducklings) Corner

New Writing Group

My apologies for the shortage of poems this month, the writing group run by Company Paradiso has reached the end of its contract. I have however taken action to remedy this problem and have volunteered to run a new writing group on Wednesdays at 11.00am.

It seems you guys are pretty inspired anyway so maybe it won't be too hard work. I'll just say something like 'write about something you did last week' or 'if you could be an animal what animal would you be?'. Then if you can't find a word that rhymes with something I'll try and come up with one. Then we read 'em out at the end.

Performing Arts ?

The Company Paradiso writing group eventually evolved into the 'Warning: May Contain Nuts' show, some of which is now on YouTube. If anyone in the writing group wants to recite their poem on camcorder (with or without funny voices or costumes) we can play it back and see how it looks. If it's a classic and you want it on YouTube that can be arranged. If you'd like to perform it on World Mental Health Day this might also be an option. This was suggested at the BMHUG Annual General Meeting and given the success of Warning May Contain Nuts may well happen. You can also send your poems to internet poetry sites.

Fluffy Duck Poem

One Day I went to Wexham
Some Fluffy Ducks to see
The size of fluffy tennis balls
And cute as cute can be.

Oh fluffy, fluffy, fluffy ducks
As cute as cute can be
You are lots more relaxing
Than psychotherapy.

I watched the fluffy duckies
They grew up big and strong
If fluffy ducks can do it
Maybe I can before long.

Hoorah for fluffy ducklings
They made the patients smile
They should work for the NHS
It wouldn't cost a pile.

For nature it is wonderful
It soothes the troubled mind
So find yourself a fluffy duck
When life has been unkind.

Hatman

**We are not The Tail trying to wag The Dog
We are The Dog trying to wag its Tail**

Wildlife Special - Fluffy Ex-Ducklings



Here we see some of the ducks formerly known as the Wexham Fluffy Ducklings now discharged from the Therapeutic Duck Unit and enjoying life in the Community. Nine of the original dozen ducklings made it to a nearby lake and are occasionally seen swimming and waddling on the bank. Some of them may have learnt how to fly and gone out to explore the world. They have answered the call of the wild and gone their way in life but they'll be fondly remembered by the staff and patients of Wexham Park as the fluffy little ducklings whose lives they shared.

Personalisation... Hmm...

At the BMHUG Annual General Meeting I asked Mike Bibby whether the cost of personalisation would come from the Sunrise budget. He said that the Sunrise budget would not be affected by personalisation in the immediate future. He also said that personalisation would be funded from the Adult Social Care budget rather than directly from the Sunrise budget which bearing in mind previous statements we have heard would appear to be a change of policy. I'll try to find out exactly what 'in the

immediate future' means and whether there has been a change of policy. If so this is good news.

I've no problems with personalisation if it doesn't mean closing or cutting Sunrise. In terms of cost per person it will probably be more expensive - one coach costs less to hire than 30 taxis. In view of the current government policy of cutting everything that moves they may decide to scrap personalisation or give us cut price personalisation: 'No coach, No taxi, Get walking!'

NEXT OPEN FORUM

Thomas Grey Centre
Friday July 30th, 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

Last Month's Cryptic Gooseword Solution...



Hog sees on ice? (7,5)
(anagram)

ANSWER:
CHINESE GOOSE

This Month's Cryptic Gooseword



Argue Hag Onions (9,5)
(anagram)

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)