

HUN NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008

ISSUE 01



HUN - new home

We Have Moved

The Haringey User's Network (HUN) was born, and spent its first two years in Green Lanes. In March we moved to new premises in Tottenham and already Green Lanes feels like a very distant memory. Moving to anywhere, whether it is across the street, or the other side of the borough is always a daunting prospect, but now that we're here, we've definitely made it our place. Special thanks are due to all the members of HUN who helped us with the move. At the old place we had to fit into the long-standing premises of the Et Cetera Workshop. Whilst we have moved along with the workshop, the new premises were selected specifically with HUN in mind.

The office is larger, lighter and airier, and the meeting room is massive. Not only are we near Tottenham Hotspurs Football Stadium for all those football enthusiasts out there, we are ideally located for all transport amenities as well as having shops and Cafes close by.

There is a lot going on in our new premises and the potential to keep on moving forward is in the air.

It is up to members and staff alike to make this potential a reality and what better way to begin than in our first newsletter.

We hope you will come and visit us. As well as showing off our new offices, we are here as always to help mental health service users make their voices heard, and in breaking down the barriers to mainstream society. Our new address is:

Unit 26 G3, N17 Studios
784-788 High Road N17 ODA
Tel: 0208 885 1258
Free phone: 0800 012 1803
Email: info@haringeyusernetwork.or.uk

I do it my way

By Gary White

My experiences from the past have shaped me into being who I am today, but this process is still ongoing. My background is fairly varied, including the time I spent in the Merchant Navy where I traveled all over the Far East, even reaching as far as Hong Kong. At age nineteen, through my Father's persuasion, I joined the British Army as a regular soldier. I signed up for six years, but actually stayed on six months more, because by then my future seemed uncertain and I was in the throes of an emotional crisis. Looking back over it now, I feel then I was going through the earlier stages of a nervous breakdown, but it wasn't apparent to either myself or the Army I still received a decent reference which was useful to me when I stayed at an ex Service Men's Home and was employed there as an Odd Job man. By then I was aged twenty-five and in a vulnerable place mentally. This unfortunately reached a head, when I lost my temper with a fellow colleague. After this, I remember my time being as one of recovery, thanks to the intervention of my family living in Cornwall. It was here I stayed during the winter months, until a local doctor referred me to a Rehabilitation Unit at Plymouth



Gary with the Mayor of Enfield

Through a friend of my sister I stayed at a Hostel for approximately a year. This was time spent relaxing and recuperating. It was from here that I ended up in London employed as a Security Guard where accommodation was included. This turned out to be somewhat of a mixed blessing whereby towards the end of the two years of this employment I had another breakdown and lost my job. I spent about six months as an in-patient at Friern Barnet Hospital during which time I attended an Industrial Therapy Unit, which was the forerunner of the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (PRA) and Etcetera Workshop. After five years there, Etcetera eventually went into the community under the supervision of PRA. There have been some voids and past connections I still miss throughout my twenty odd years at PRA and at Friern Barnet Hospital. I do try and keep these links going, and joining Haringey User Network (HUN) has been very useful in this regard. I find HUN organization very inspiring and it has opened my eyes to possibilities and inner potential, I never realized I had. I like to put myself fully into everything I do, including my artwork.



Gary's pottery creations

This has helped me over time in getting to know myself and accepting a laissez-faire attitude without letting it all pass me by. I suppose you could say, in the style of Frank Sinatra "I did it my way", and still do.

The need to be valued

By David Hindle

I have been involved in giving my views, assessing services, interviewing new staff etc as a mental health service user for almost five years. When I started I found it very odd that in some parts of the country service users would be paid for sitting on committees, interviewing staff etc, as I felt that this was voluntary activity. I did of course have no problem with receiving expenses covering the expenditure in carrying out the activity. Over time I have however come to realise that the principle of payment for service users for their time and effort is also appropriate. In Haringey we have been promised a policy on payment for service user involvement for 18 months. We had understood it would include the Mental Health Trust, Primary Care Trust and the Council. Having seen no progress for 18 months a number of members of Haringey User Network recently threatened to withdraw from meetings, if the matter was not satisfactorily resolved by the end of May. It was only after that we found out that the Mental Health Trust had an existing policy.

Haringey is part of the area covered by Barnet Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust. The Trust's stated policy is to ensure that "any service user involved in activity for the benefit of the Trust will receive payment for their time and effort either via the Trust or the local service user group". This policy is not well known in Haringey, unlike Barnet and Enfield where payment for mental health service user involvement is common practice. There are however complications as Primary Care Trusts and Councils also have an important part to play in mental health services. Funding arrangements for the provision of payments also varies, which affects what they can be received for. In Enfield they can only be received for Trust led involvement (not PCT and or Council), whilst in Barnet involvement where the Council and PCT are also central can be included. I understand that the Barnet money is



via the local user group, whilst in Enfield it is via the Mental Health Trust.

In Haringey things are confusing as for example members of the Patients' Council do receive some payments, whilst at the same time there is little knowledge that the Mental Health Trust does have a policy. Clearly in Haringey it is important to have a policy and practice where PCT and Council mental health service user involvement activities are included, alongside those of the Mental Health Trust. Whilst it may be argued that writing up an elaborate policy may take time, there is no reason why a simple protocol could not be adopted quickly. Indeed the Mental Health Trust already has a policy, which applies to Haringey. All parties may not have identified money in their budgets, but there must be contingencies and in the bigger picture the sums are small. My hope is that once sorted, more service users will come forward to offer their time, experiences and expertise to help make the mental health services in Haringey better.

Mental Health Conference Feedback

By Mashfiqul Joy Alam

The mental health strategy day was constructive and useful for employees of the Trust, service users and service providers. It was an opportunity, during the workshop sessions, to debate and address a wide range of important issues.

Here is a summary and my feedback on the day.

- Stigma and discrimination, which often prevents people with mental health problems seeking help in the first place. The Trust, in my humble opinion, should tackle stigma through the Trust Communication's Department and involving willing users to educate the media.
- Advocacy. My suggestion is to abolish PALS and other services and train service users to act as mental health advocates.
- Accredited qualifications on a number of subjects. I believe that specific accredited tailored mental health courses, whether in gardening or any other subject, can boost the self-esteem of service users.
- Partnership with voluntary organizations. The voluntary sector understands the needs

of a wide range of community's users groups and a strategy that will meet these needs is paramount.

- Partnership with Police forces. We need to encourage bridge building and discussion on issues that affect the safety of users in our communities. Perhaps the police could attend user group meetings, to find out what is going on and how the police could contribute to improving users' attitude of the police.
- Culturally diverse services. I believe they are important and essential
- Quick access to Crisis Units. I am of the opinion that there is a need for more crisis units, as Alexandra Road Crisis Unit appears to be the only crisis unit in the borough, with a lengthy waiting list. When users are in crisis, they do not expect to wait a five months for a room as within that time period, they are vulnerable to anything and thus there needs to be more crisis units. I know this from experience.

Proposed Closure of Finsbury Ward

By David Hindle

The Haringey part of our local Mental Health Trust recently started a consultation with staff over the proposed closure of Finsbury ward (18-19 beds) at St Ann's. The ward is one of three male adult acute admission wards (total 56 available beds) allocated to Haringey at St Ann's. It should be noted that in the recent past it has not been uncommon for these male wards to have more patients than beds on some nights, leading to sleeping out elsewhere at St Ann's. It is of course also necessary to recognise that Delayed Discharges (those who are ready to be discharged but have nowhere appropriate to go), is a contributing factor to the number of beds needed. Whilst the staff consultation has commenced no consultation has been undertaken with service users and carers, nor a document provided for us with the necessary information. Critically, no evidence has yet been produced to show that the need for beds has declined to the extent that the ward can be closed without patients being adversely affected, nor quantification of additional investment to be made in community services. In a recent article in the local Journal newspaper the Trust's spokesperson is quoted as saying, "Finsbury Ward development [closure] is part of



the longer term programme of shifting resources into the community, which is a better and more cost effective way to help increase people's recovery." Adding that, "this is a development which will enable us to increase the number of staff working within home treatment teams." Those may on face value appear to be reassuring words, but where is the evidence that the need is not/will not be there? The Mental Health Cares' Association has protested about the proposed closure, including the lack of proper consultation. I have also initially challenged the unacceptable lack of consultation in my capacity as Chair of the Consultation Subgroup of the Partnership Board/LIT Meeting. A proper consultation is urgently needed, particularly with service users and carers with full disclosure of the evidence. The Mental Health Trust now accepts this, and the Acting Chief Executive (Maria Kane) is going to Haringey Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2nd June, to agree the scope, extent and timing of the consultation.

Monthly HUN meetings, for all our members

*meetings take place at N17 Studios
from 11.00am until 12.30pm approx.*

Monday 22 June
Monday 7 July
Monday 11 August
Monday 1 September
Monday 6 October
Monday 3 November
Monday 1 December

Monthly Focus Group meetings

Focus Group is set up with the aim of promoting positive change; it gives the chance to air suggestions and views in relation to mental health services, in an encouraging and supportive environment.

Friday 30 May
Friday 27 June
Friday 25 July
Friday 29 August
Friday 26 September
Friday 21 October
Friday 28 November
Friday 19 December

All meetings are from 11am until 12:30pm at:
Community Meeting Room,
Wood Green Central Library,
High Rd, N22 6XD

Refreshments provided.

*Acknowledgements: Thanks to
Giuseppe Milazzo for producing
and designing the first issue of the
HUN Newsletter.*

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

In becoming a HUN member

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Date _____

How did you learn about HUN? _____

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Haringey User Network is hosted by PRA Services.