



For better
mental health

RB Mind Service Users' Consultation

14th December 2009 at the Richmond Royal between 6pm to 7:15pm.

Present:

Service Users:

Centre 32:

4 Male Service Users

2 Female Service Users

Mind in Mortlake:

1 Male Service User

Social Centre:

1 Female Service User

Others present:

Vince Cable M.P.

Jackie Jones, Officer from Grants Direct

RB Mind Trustees: Penny Lee,

George Chamberlain (who chaired the Consultation)

Cheryl Ould

Janet Kingston

Noëlle Poole

Zoë Reed

Ann Wallis

Staff:

Sarah Bristow Bailey

Darren Vella

These are minutes that were taken during a meeting held at the Richmond Royal between Trustees of RB Mind, Staff of RB Mind and Service Users. This was the second meeting out of a series of public events that was organised by the Trustees of RB Mind regarding the changes it is implementing to its' drop-in services. Please find below extracts from this meeting.

George Chamberlain (Trustee) Chaired the Meeting. He started the Consultation by saying that they were here to listen to service users' views on the changes happening within RB Mind.

- **Centre 32 Service User 1** said: 'Everything is up in the air. Only 2 places exist for service users in Twickenham, Elleray Hall and Whitton Social Club for aged people.'
- **Centre 32 Service User 2** said: 'No place has been found where Centre 32 members can go to in the same area.'
- **Jennifer Espie (acting RB Mind Treasurer)** said: 'there would no transplant of Centre 32 to somewhere else.'
- **Centre 32 Service User 3** said: 'We would like another centre not paid for by RB Mind.'
- **Trustee Ann Wallis** said: 'Centre 32 will no longer exist the way it is running.'
- **Centre 32 Service User 4** said: 'I am quoting the service users' representative who is absent: "The Group consultation about services and building of Centre 32 has not taken place. Referring to Vince Cable's letter, there is needed a breakdown of running costs of Centre 32 over the last 4 years." M had asked if the accounts of Centre 32 could be made available.'

M had also said that 'Claire Blackburn, the Centre 32 manager, was not allowing the Centre 32 users' group to discuss the centre's future and that of the building inside Centre 32. She told the users they would have to go next door to the Pub.'

- **Chair, Penny Lee** asked: 'How do you envisage the future use of Centre 32?'
- **Centre 32 Service User 3** said: 'Run by Time Bank groups?'
- **Penny Lee Chair:** said 'Yes.'
- **Vince Cable** said: 'There is no right or wrong but we need to find a resolution. There needs to exist some sense of community. People can

stand on their own two feet. Some service users have previous experience of drop-in centres shutting.'

Mr. Cable said he had 'heard all sides of story but still did not understand why the closures are proceeding as they are. He then listed possible reasons for the closures:

1st Reason: Is it because of finance? We have never seen the accounts!

2nd Reason: Centre 32. Is it too exclusive etc.? This is not a valid criticism!

Centre 32 Female Service User said: 'she used Centre 32 and found it warm and supportive. She said she would be lost without Centre 32. She reported that Service Users had wanted to hold a meeting this morning, and Claire Blackburn forbade them.'

She said: 'Vince does not think the Council want the closure of Centre 32 – it should be put on hold for at least a year. Service users were all upset, and the counselling provided by RB Mind had not been a help (*all of the service users agreed about this*).'

- **Vince Cable** said: 'When he met with Penny Lee and Emma King, he understood a commitment from them to have a new centre (*hub*) across the river, but this has not happened. Plans for the closure of Centre 32 in February 2010 continued.'
- **Trustee:** Ann Wallis recounted that 'Gunna Finsdottir had done all the successful work to attract women to Centre 32.'
- **Centre 32 Service User 3:** 'confirmed that the number of women attending Centre 32 over the past 4 years had increased from 14% to 31% of total attendance.'
- **Centre 32 Female Service User** said: 'that there is very little support for the planned changes. Twickenham service users did not want to go to the Vineyard Project. They found it frightening. She herself would never go to the Vineyard Project.'
- **Social Centre Female Service User** said: 'Penny, "Service" is the key word. Change of service for Centre 32; closure of staff service – we don't know about the building of Centre 32 or how it will be used. Community Development Service; Time Bank Service; People's Network and individuals to do things individually. But volunteer bodies can't look ahead very far because of funding which is difficult. How can both be true?'
- **Vince Cable** said: 'What happens on March 1st 2010? Is a Service User given the key of Centre 32? What is the model?'

- **Penny Lee, Chair:** said: 'We will discuss the use of Centre 32 at the Management Meeting following on from this meeting.'
- **Vince Cable** said: 'Is it quite possible that Centre 32 will close?'
- **Centre 32 Service User 4** said: 'that he was applying for funding to conduct a survey of service users' needs.'
- **Zoë Reed Trustee:** (*then talked about 'Recovery and care in the community and individuals progressing'*)
- **Centre 32 Female Service User** said: 'Unwell service users do not want to go to various sites in the community without a paid member of staff who is trained in caring.'
- **Centre 32 Male Service User 1** said: 'A Member of Vista Vision Impaired in Richmond, Jackie Jones, the manger would like to rent Centre 32 and use upstairs and let Service Users use downstairs. '
- **Centre 32 Male Service User 4** said: 'Trust with Richmond Borough Mind has been ruptured. It needs to be mended. But most important with the Service Users - the building of Centre 32 needs to remain open. The choice should be the Users' choice.'
- **Vince Cable** said: 'The point has been made. Given talk of reduction in service, are trustees willing to confront this by looking at management overheads? If money is taken it should be taken from the Top. I worry that the process has been that the Cart has gone before the Horse – closures date decided before consulting strategy of Service Users' needs. The Closure date seems to be sacrosanct, and this is the wrong way round of doing things.'

How this process is being managed is wrong. A pause is needed. Having spoken to all parties, why can't the decision to close Centre 32 and Ham Friends' be put on hold for 12 months? This would be good for people with Mental Health problems, as they find such changes a shock. As there will be a reduction in service, are trustees willing to confront this possibility and to also look at management overheads? Target date for closures - then what do we do next? Isn't this the wrong way round? Will you come back to us and let us know basically how the new structure is going to be managed.'

- **Vince Cable** continued: 'There are possible reasons for change:

The 1st reason being financial: People haven't seen accounts or been given any information, to enable them to understand this.

The 2nd reason: one excuse RB Mind gave was that drop-in centres are too clichéd; too male; too few female users. But actually women do use Centre 32 and have done so for a long time.

The 3rd reason: RB Mind has to comply with policies of Richmond Borough Council which require people to be more independent.'

Vince Cable said:' There are many ideas for developing peer led activities and an opportunity to discuss these ideas is needed. Yes, it is wrong to oppose all change, but any change has to take place should be over realistic time frame.'

- **Centre 32 Female Service User said:** 'I first went to Centre 32 two months ago and found it to be an excellent resource.'
- **Centre 32 Male Service User 4** said: 'There is very little in the borough and some service users can't come to Richmond as it is not in the same CMHT. There is only the Vineyard Project, but it's too threatening. Centre 32 is very welcoming.'
- **Other service users said:** 'Centre 32 is very supportive. There are lots of activities in the centre.' One Service users said: 'I never normally speak out, but I am very upset about what is happening.'
- **Centre 32 Male Service User** continued: 'Self direct support is supposedly available but no it is not - just closures are discussed. So where is the money going to be spent? Don't you have duty of care for vulnerable people?'
- **George Chamberlain Trustee** said: 'The decisions which had been taken by RB Mind were made in the hope to continue to suit everyone, including service users, even though it was very difficult. There seems to be confusion over "closure" between Services. We have now an increase in the number of services. It is not about closure. We have spoken about change for some time. Regarding the Centre 32 building, there is an option to keep it as long as we can. However the building will be used differently.'
- **Jennifer Espie Trustee** said: 'There are other things happening in Twickenham such as the community development project; BME Time Bank volunteering; also the Peoples' network. Voluntary bodies can't look very far ahead due to lack of funding. There are currently 5 grants, which are undecided - statutory or other. We really want to provide a clear picture of the future.'

Yes we are aware there is some slippage, due to illness of Emma. Positives that I'm hearing are the enthusiasm of dedicated staff working towards supporting people to run groups and help themselves. Darren Vella manages different services. He is trying to keep things going in Emma Kings' absence. We need staff for the new services. It's a process and this has to be done and has to be completed for us to move things forward. To clarify the finances, we have many discussions with the Borough & Primary Care Trust. We constantly see if they can help with our situation. This is an historical problem. The difference is that our auditors now say that we have to show significant changes, and so changes have been made.'

- **Centre 32 Male Service User 4** said: 'It is the speed of change and your reasons for change. You have misinterpreted the Government Paper "Putting People First." Where are people going to go to instead of Centre 32? We would like opportunity to discuss strategies with Trustees and Service Users. One option is don't change anything. There are other options, we believe there can be a resolution. However he said: 'There is an issue - I am unable to consult with Service Users within Centre 32.'
- **Another service user asked:** 'What happens on the 1 march 2010? If there are no staff there? Is the centre still available to service users? '
- **Centre 32 Male Service User 2** said : 'Yes, someone will have a key.'
- **George Chamberlain Trustee said:** 'We will be discussing this tonight at the Management Meeting which follows this meeting. We will discuss changes on shape of services but we don't know yet what will be decided because we haven't had the Board Meeting with all the facts available.'
- **Jackie Jones** Direct Payments Officer said: 'Can you put the decision on the closures on hold?'
- **Centre 32 Male Service User 4** said: 'Is it possible to be clearer about what the actual costs of keeping Centre 32 open are? Otherwise how can you make judgement?'
- **George Chamberlain Trustee** said: 'There will be a consultation with service users, and Amber can speak with service users. How long do you think your consultation will take?'
- **Amber** said: '4-5 weeks: up to 3-4 months if it is done properly.'
- **George Chamberlain** said: 'RB Mind had been trying to prepare itself to keep robust. With people taking control of their own lives – excellent. We believe commissioners will be highly supportive of this, but in reality we still need to balance the books.'
- **Centre 32 Male Service User 4** said: 'Some service users are concerned about not having the safety of having a paid worker available, who is trained. You need to change strategy. Service users can make you money. We are more powerful than you.'
- **George Chamberlain, Trustee** said 'We have touched on potential opportunities. Closure date: clarification is what it is we are moving towards. We will let Service Users know the Management Meeting decision by the end of this week.'

ACTION

Sarah Bristow Bailey to discuss what sparks are at next mtg.

