

Questions put to the trustees of Leicester and County Mission for the Deaf. Loughborough Mission for the Deaf, working name Action Deafness

Hand delivered to the joint chairs: David Mumford and Colin Henson.

At the meeting between board of trustees and the joint centre user groups 25th August 2009.

We have categories into which questions fall, please note there maybe some overlapping of questions. Please take your time to read and fully answer these questions. They have ALL been raised my members of the USER groups of the Leicester CENTRE.

At the end of this document is a short piece written by one of our members who wanted to share something with you.

The Loughborough Centre Closure:

Questions:

1. Why is there a conflict as to what actually happened during the meeting in March / April with Craig and Loughborough DeMAG? I will explain what I mean - . Why is Loughborough saying that confirmation of closure was received on June 29th, yet the trustees decided the closure on March 31st? A meeting took place between Craig and Loughborough Group (pre DeMAG) whereby Craig said that there was a ONLY a possibility of closure and asked Loughborough to keep quiet about it. Craig said they WOULD be kept informed and consulted before any agreement was made. Then three months later, 29th June 2009, they receive a letter stating the building will be closed on 31st August 2009.

What has happened here?

We strongly believe that the Loughborough people are not lying about that meeting in March/ April because their behaviour and response now as to wanting to save the centre, would have actually occurred last March, these people are not stupid! This lack of communication has given Loughborough LESS time in which to challenge your decisions. This is a serious lack of consultation and transparency

We want answers!

a) Is it that Craig kept it secret and was afraid to tell the groups the truth, therefore fudging and saying it's only a possibility in order to keep it out of the press etc? If so how can we possibly trust him to tell us the truth? How can someone lead an organisation if they are not trusted by the beneficiaries of the said charity?

b) Or is it a misinterpretation by his interpreters, voicing him over, did Craig say that it was closing and the interpreters say that it's a possibility?

2. What are your plans with the Loughborough building?

3. Has anyone expressed an interest in using or buying the building?

4. Loughborough is a charity in its own right, are you going to allow them (as they have and are requesting) to separate from Leicester and have their own board of trustees.

5. When setting up the outreach service in Loughborough – did you consider the needs of the Deaf community – were they consulted or just told that they are having this service? Where is the funding for this service from? Is it Next step, IAG funding etc

6. If it is Next step or IAG funding, is this service focussing upon employment and education? It would seem that the vast majority of the Loughborough Deaf community are indeed retired and this is a useless service for them – what do they have??

7. What services are you offering in this 'outreach', why have you not publicised them?

8. Why won't the trustees give us sight of the crucial structural engineer's report? Is it because they fear for its credibility? Is it similar to the unprofessional "Executive summary of the due diligence report" and the "Risk assessment report"? These give no acceptable grounds for closing the building. Has any statutory notice been served on Action Deafness that the building be closed?

9. What are your plans with the Loughborough building? Has Action Deafness made any moves to sell? Has anyone expressed an interest in using or buying the building?

10. Our solicitors advice is that Loughborough is a separate charity. Action Deafness merely manages. Will the trustees accept the advice that the Loughborough charity be reactivated with its own independent board of trustees?

11. When setting up the outreach service with Liz Brown in Loughborough – did you consider the needs of the Deaf community – were they consulted or just told that they have this service?

12. How are outreach services in Leicestershire progressing? Have you set up lip-reading classes in Melton Mowbray, Hinckley or anywhere else?

Leicester Centre Closure

Questions

1. The rumours going around say that the Leicester building is going to close? Are these true?
2. Are there any plans to close the Leicester building in the future? You have a strategic plan for 2009 – 2012, are there plans to close it during or after this time.
3. Do you have a property policy, can we see it?
4. Are there any relocation plans for Action Deafness?
5. What is the notice period you have to give to the social services as to vacating this building?
6. Have the Leicester Tigers, Leicester College or anyone else for that matter else expressed an interest buying in this building?
7. Is it true that the joint chairs of this committee (Colin Henson and David Mumford – have stated that this building is a mausoleum? Please explain what you mean by this.

Charity

1. Why is the charity/working organisation Action Deafness now covering the East Midlands? The constitution of our charity covers Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. **NOT** the East Midlands.

We do not wish to become service led by an East Midlands organisation, neither do we wish to become an East Midlands regional organisation. Is this your current plan? Or do you plan this for our future?

See quotes below from information which can be downloaded from the web states that Craig Crowley

Quoted from NRCPD website

“Craig is the Chief Executive of Action Deafness, a regional Voluntary and Community Sector Organisation based in the East Midlands. He is the Trustee Chair of UK Deaf Sport and also a Trustee of the Leicestershire-based CVS Community Partnership. Craig worked for the RNID as Deputy Director of Care Services and also worked as

Executive Director of the European Union of the Deaf. He was awarded an MBE for services to Deaf Sport at The Queen's 80th Birthday Honours in 2006.”

Quoted from Deaf parenting website

“Craig is currently Chief Executive of Action Deafness, a regional Voluntary Organisation based in Leicester. He is a Trustee of CACDP (Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People) and is also a Trustee Chair of UK Deaf Sport. He was Vice-President of FYD (Friends for Young Deaf) until 2001 when the organisation was merged with NDCS.”

2. Looking at that the above statements it would appear that Leicester has already lost its identity. Does the charity’s governing document, the constitution cover the East Midlands?

3. Is this is where the charities money is being funnelled or invested?

Remember, our charities constitution states that it’s for the beneficiaries of Leicestershire and Rutland. If money is being channelled or earmarked or used for East Midland ventures, you as the people responsible for looking after our charity ARE allowing this to happen. Is this mismanagement of our charities funds?

For your information the services in Leicester are truly dire and our CEO should be focussing solely on issues faced here and not building an empire. Can you make sure that this happens? Is it within your power? As trustees of our charity you are in charge of the CEO. He has to listen to what you say. Or is this not the case?

4. If the CEO continues in post the charity will in a year or two cease to exist. Is this what you as trustees want to happen or be a part of?

5. Reserves. Why have you allowed the reserves to be fully accessible so that they are now depleting – is this part of your plan to effectively ‘wind up’ and close the charity – stripping it of all its assets.

6. This charity is a Church of England foundation charity, why does it seem that the church pulling out? Do they deem Action Deafness as a ‘failing charity’?

7. Why are there NO church nominated trustee’s, who out of this board of trustees church nominated? Why are they not full to capacity?

8. Is David Mumford a nominated or co-opted trustee?

9. Have ALL of your meetings been quorate? By this we mean have there been a minimum of six trustees present. Have decisions been made when you weren’t quorate?

We request copies of your meetings outlining all decision making regarding the centres, action deafness and charities. Confidential names can be covered.

10. The constitution is out of date, it is patronising and discriminatory to us as the beneficiaries. The attitude to involvement and voting rights are 19th century. How can the Deaf community be involved if the governing document doesn't grant them any say in running THEIR charity!

11. Have each of the trustees attended a Deaf awareness course?

12. REDUNDANCIES. Why on two occasions has Craig and Action Deafness made redundancies stating its to save money and then effectively re-employed staff under new roles - this contradicts itself! It's not cost saving at all, we would do a better job of cost saving and that would be to put everyone on notice and effectively starting from scratch. Spending on roles which are within our means and not wasting valuable reserves!

Finance - these questions are directed to **Graham Smith**

Questions

1. We request full itemised accounts of all income and expenditure for both charities covering the last four years; we are requesting to see a full accurate itemisation of all income and expenditure from both charities and business etc. We do not want copies of the summary version of the accounts

2. How much is left in the reserves to date?

3. What do you envisage this to be at the end of this financial year ending April 10?

4. We want you to freeze the access to the reserves, to cease further spending in order that the future of the charity can be saved. Will you do this?

5. We want clarification as to why the interpreting service cost £440,000 to run in the accounts for year ending 2009. Why are the admin costs and Core costs in the region of £200,000.00e require a full explanation and breakdown of the actual costings.

6. The hard of hearing group have not received monies left to their group by friend, members and family who have died. This is because cheques are made to Action Deafness and swallowed up – can you explain why this money does not go to whom it is destined for. This is a serious breach of trust. The people who have died have bequeathed their money to what they believed it was going too, when in reality it hasn't.

7. Can you confirm that this HAS NOT happened to any other group?

8. Is the donation book up to date?

9. Craig was employed to reduce the deficit in 2006 accounts it states 2006-2009 will aim to reduce deficit. In fact it's trebled or quadrupled why have you done nothing about this?

10. Why do the Deaf pay for the room hire? In the beginning CC said he wanted to leave the Key Hall available every two weeks for private parties/ bookings. CC said this would bring in money. Over the last two years how much money did this bring in? NONE! Can you explain to us why CC failed to get bookings in order to bring in some money?

12. Why have some deaf community user groups been asked to pay for the use of the centre and others haven't why is this?

13. Why doesn't Action Deafness business development manager help the groups apply for funding for costs associated with groups?

14. The Deaf community want to know what has happened to all of the money which has been raised by fundraising – we see nothing from it, no record of such income. Does this go towards staff wages? We want to see evidence as to where this money goes.

Services

Questions:

1. We as the Deaf community do not want to become totally service led – by services which we have no choice or say in developing. How can you develop a service without first consulting the community?

2. Funding applications request how the need for this service has been evaluated. Can we have copies of all funding application forms, these should be public documents. We want to see how these services have been evaluated in order to identify need.

3. We want a list of all your current funding bodies. Public money is subject to public scrutiny.

4. Forums do not take place on a regular basis. The last forum was seven months ago, why is this?

5. These forums are **NOT** an opportunity for us the Deaf community or beneficiaries to speak, they are purely a tokenistic process, whereby AD informing US as to what's

going on and NOT asking us for our views or listening to us. This is discriminatory in today's day and age.

6. The advocacy project has proven to be useful however; the 8 week waiting list is appalling and unacceptable. This is problematic to our members who have pressing needs. People cannot wait 8 weeks. Surely the wasted over spend could be better used here!

7. When Jason Bell was the project development officer he worked well in order to establish and start the BSL classes. This was a first in this centres history. These classes grew and became popular and successful.

Plans were made to look into developing a level three course to take place at the centre.

When the new CEO was appointed, Mark Jefferies employed, Jason Bell was put through a great time of pressure and stress. Mark Jefferies lost his job. Jason was then made redundant during the CEO first restructure of the organisation. Liz Brown and Catherine White were employed. Things deteriorated after this. These classes suffered and the number of students wanting to learn reduced due to high costings. Jason's hard work of securing funding through the LSC was damaged. The courses cost too much! The way that tutors were dealt with was appalling. Tutors often left and now refuse to work for Action Deafness.

The name our centre has for tuition of BSL is not a positive one. Now the classes have finished. What is going on? Is this another sign to signal closure? Are courses being outsourced?

CEO:

Questions

- 1.** Craig is involved with numerous committees and trustees etc. This is not purely for Action Deafness's benefit. Are you as the board of trustees totally convinced that Craig has his eye fully on the Ball??
- 2.** How can he use his time effectively to work with each committee and organisation to which he is involved? Yes we know when he was put in post that he was involved with Deaf sports. But now he is seeking to be a president of a sports organisation and going away to Taipan!
- 3.** Does Craig get additional paid annual leave to pursue these additional ventures? E.G Craig is seeking to become the president of International committee for Sports for the Deaf (ICSD) and will presumably be going to TAIPAN – Can you confirm that the CEO is going to be in Taipan in September?
- 4.** Are funds from our charity or Action Deafness services covering this?
- 5.** Is this paid holiday or unpaid leave?

6. Can you confirm that the fund-raising initiative which Craig, his interpreter Russell and a friend of theirs some time ago, had to raise a minimum of £3,000 each (totalling a minimum of £9,000.00) to undertake the event, an event abroad, can you confirm what this event was? We have had information which states that the three of them pulled out last minute and that Action Deafness footed the £9,000 bill? Can you confirm us that this did not happen – if a person has set about to raise funds by sponsorship it's their responsibility to raise that money and not our charities. If the above is true, where did this money go? We request a full breakdown of the expenditure of this charity and organisation.

7. We want the CEO removed from this organisation and emergency measures set in place incorporating us the Beneficiaries of this charity to work out plans in which to save our centre and to enable us to move forward and develop this centre and charity in a way which we the Deaf, Deafened, Hard of hearing and Deaf blind people want.

Important note: This centre still has the same impact upon Deaf people today as it did over 60 years ago.

Lifestory 1: A 78 year old Deaf man, orally educated, was not allowed, as was the case, to be involved with the Deaf centre. At the age of 18, this man met an older Deaf man, who invited him along to the Deaf club, his parents allowed him to as he was now an adult. From that day forward he felt that he belonged 'with people the same as him, he had found his identity.

Lifestory 2: Today the Ldcs are jointly responsible for the youth club based at Action Deafness. There is a boy who at age 14 joined the youth club; he is oral, hard of hearing, well educated. His parents bought him along to try out and see what was on offer. Prior to this they were (still to this day!) advised to keep away from the deaf centre. (Why is this?). This boy after a few weeks of attending told his parents "I feel like I belong here, at last I feel like I belong somewhere, I'm a part of something.

A thought for you trustees to take on board. The world may have become a smaller place for all of US hearing people. Likewise it has for Deaf people. But this centre reels off this same experience from many a Deaf person from the past to the present day – it's been a place of enlightenment, a place where they feel equal, a place to not face barriers that are given from the hearing world, they feel they belong, they are a part of something. Most of all they find what's important to us all – **THEIR IDENTITY!** If you take this building away the benefit, cultural identity will be placed at risk. Currently Deaf people take this building for granted – because its always been there, many believe it always will be – the belief from the missionaries, trustees and chairs of the past who worked darned hard to get it to where it is, also had that belief that this centre will always be stood tall here on Welford Road in Leicester.

Do you the trustees of this centre want to be guilty of stopping this enlightenment that Deaf people often have during their late teens? Not all Deaf people are lucky enough to become involved with us at such a young age.

This section was written by one of our members, Karen Sly, Vice chair of LDCS.

Think about it, your actions are what will change the life of the Deaf, Deafened, Hard of hearing and the Deaf blind community based in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The role of a trustee in this charity is to think about its beneficiaries, the people to whom the charity was created for. Not what one person's ideals are! We are the voice of many. Please take our views seriously that's all we ask.

We by no means wish to bring this charity or the organisation into disrepute, nor do we wish to pursue our concerns as to the mismanagement with the press. This is why we haven't done so as yet. However, if we are given no alternative but to do so, it will have to be a decision that we unfortunately will have to make. Please think carefully about the decisions you are the trustees make.