

## Anyone want to design a new hospital?

It may be obvious, but it is worth stressing that NHS Lothian isn't the only one planning a new mental health hospital. There is no central list, but I know of both Perth (Tayside) and Larbert (Forth Valley) are well advanced in Scotland, there might be more, and certainly there will be numerous similar projects at any one time in England. Service Users should try and meet to share experiences

Here in Edinburgh we have to repeat the two option appraisal meetings held earlier this summer; the Scottish Government complained that they hadn't been run properly! Whilst EUF has now only 2 votes at each of these meetings in October there is no reason why more EUF members can't come along and help feed their opinions into EUF's votes!

I attended a 2-day conference in Preston earlier this month – all about designing Mental Health hospitals. As a service-user they were happy to grant me a free place, and VOX (Voices of Experience) came up with the funds for my train fare. It was certainly very useful to spent time talking to both architects who have spent their careers designing hospitals, and NHS Trust project managers who have been involved right through a new-build.

Not surprisingly the main consensus was:

“A well designed hospital more than pays for the additional cost during the lifetime of the hospital”

Architects, of course, would say that – greater fees for them. But a good building with a nice environment brings many benefits to patients, staff, carers – indeed all endusers (horrible term!) of the building.

- ◆ Less stressful experience for patients and carers
- ◆ Reduced staff illness
- ◆ Able to recruit and retain higher calibre staff
- ◆ Fewer incidences of violence
- ◆ Lower running costs
- ◆ Reduced average length of patient stay
- ◆ Reduced re-admission rates

The involvement of service users throughout the design process was clearly highly valued in England. For many NHS Trusts it appears

common practice to pay their service users for their time. And for one hospital, service users were involved in approving every single set of the architect's plans.

Ideas or new innovations that we might not yet have seen introduced in Scotland are already available in England. For example at one of the new mental health hospitals in Birmingham patients have three different options for their meals.

- ◆ Eating on the ward
- ◆ Eating in a central cafeteria
- ◆ Cooking for themselves

Yes, when it is finally built the new Royal Edinburgh hospital, - wherever it may be located – will be a huge leap forward. All the rooms will be single, with ensuite bathrooms. But that is no reason for service users to lower their aim and not to be fully involved in every step of the planning process.

If we leave it entirely to NHS Lothian, then we will have no right to complain afterwards.

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