Positive Action for Change in Mental Health Services

Themes from the conference debate

**1 Collusion, co-option and compromise**

* Do we need to step completely outside the current mental health, NHS and welfare systems to effect real change in how we support people in mental distress?
* We need to return to the original aims of the welfare state to improve people’s whole lives, not simply treat the damage caused by endemic social injustice and inequality.
* It is possible to achieve some change from within but the costs to individuals can be high, personally and professionally, and it can be hard to avoid being compromised.
* How do we avoid the mental health system co-opting and compromising innovative ideas and approaches devised by and for service users (cf. recovery)?

**2 Non-professionalism**

* What makes a ‘good’ therapist/practitioner?
* What matters is the ‘quality of love that you offer’.
* Be the person you would like to be treated by.
* The ability to heal others is in each and every one of us – it can’t be ‘professionalised’.
* Be the best person you can be, not the best professional.
* We need an alternative to medical, psy terminology – do we stop even using the word ‘health’ and talk instead of ‘distress’?

**3 Equality, power and influence**

* This is a battle of ideas, not professions.
  + This is bigger than a turf war between the psy professions.
  + We need to develop an alliance of people across all the mental health professions.
  + We need to ally with organisations concerned with the wider causes of mental distress.
* Real change will be achieved by the service user movement, powered by civil rights activism, not by mental health professionals.