**Service Brokerage Parts 1 and 2** by **Ken Lumb**

(Source **Coalition** October 1989)

**About:**

This is a document by Ken Lumb.

Ken Lumb was a member of UPIAS and of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP).

He also edited GMCDP’s magazine, which is called **Coalition**.

This document was written for Coalition in 1989.

This document is about a big meeting he attended.

It was hosted by a company called Good Impressions Publishing Ltd.

The hosts have invited people to come to this meeting to talk about their new idea called ‘**Service Brokerage**’.

**Service Brokerage** was an idea that people had in the 1980s about how to give disabled people more of a choice in the support they receive.

This kind of support includes services like personal assistance, equipment, and things like day centres or employment services.

Service Brokerage would mean that disabled people’s support would be bought for just them as an individual, instead of the council buying the same support for every disabled person in their area.

This sounds like a good idea, as all disabled people are different and will need different support.

But Ken Lumb says that it is not that simple, as the people who would help sort out these services already had their own ideas of how this would be run.

This means that disabled people wouldn’t be in full control of sorting out their own services and support.

The people that want to run the Service Brokerage idea said that there are 3 things that need to happen for a disabled person before they buy a service that suited their needs.

**Number 1**, someone would have to be a **broker** for them

**A broker** is someone who buys things on someone else’s behalf.

So, if you book a holiday, your travel agent is your broker and they buy your plane tickets and hotel for you.

In service brokerage, the broker is the person that buys the support services for the disabled person.

**Number 2,** the disabled person’s friends and family, social worker, and any carers become something called a **Joshua Committee.**

**A Joshua Committee** is a group of people who tell a disabled person what kind of support could be bought for them, and advise them on what might be most helpful.

It’s called a Joshua Committee because of the Book of Joshua in the Bible.

In the Book of Joshua, the heroes in the story break down some massive walls to help them win a battle.

According to people who want service brokerage to happen, the Joshua Committees will help break down the ‘walls’ that stop disabled people from having control over their lives.

These walls are barriers that have stopped disabled people before now in controlling the help that they get.

**Number 3,** there needs to be **individual funding** for the disabled person.

**Individual Funding** is where councils and health services say that each individual disabled person can spend a certain amount on support services, rather than the money being spent on things any disabled person can use.

The service brokerage idea originally came from Canada, and it was used to buy support for children with learning difficulties.

In the late 1980s, some companies in Britain started to try and sell service brokerage to local councils.

Good Impressions Publishing hopes that having meetings with disabled people, carers, family and staff will help to tell people about their ideas for Service Brokerage.

This is what has caused Ken Lumb to write this document.

This document is spilt into 2 parts and is about different parts of the meeting about Service Brokerage.

Part 1 is about Ken's thoughts on the hosts of the meeting and a film that was shown.

Part 2 is about Ken's thoughts on the meeting that was held afterwards.

**Part One: Service Brokerage – the Movie**

Ken Lumb talks about a film the hosts have shown to the guests of the meeting.

The film was about Service Brokerage and disabled people

Ken said that watching the film was weird because disabled people were only in a little part in it, even though it was all about disabled people and the help they get.

Ken thinks that this might be a sign that disabled people aren’t really involved in Service Brokerage even though the organisers say they are.

Ken said the film pretended to be about what disabled people want but was really an advert for Service Brokerage.

Good Impressions Publishing say that Service Brokerage will help disabled people to have choices in the help that they get.

Disabled people should have choices and control over their own care, so this sounds like a good idea.

But Ken Lumb is worried that Good Impressions Publishing Ltd. are using the language and hard work of the Disabled People’s Movement to sell the idea of Service Brokerage.

Lots of disabled people in Britain had spoken out about how they wanted the care system to change when the film was made.

None of them were invited to be in the film, and none of them have been asked their views on Service Brokerage.

Ken thinks that if there have been no disabled people involved in any of this so far, then it is hard to believe they will be included in Service Brokerage later.

This means they might not be involved in controlling their own services or having real choice over the help that they get.

Ken says that people from Good Impressions Publishing Ltd are more bothered about pushing their own ideas than what disabled people think.

Ken Lumb says that the film tries to make people from Good Impressions Publishing Ltd look really good, but does not show the different ideas that disabled people have.

Ken says that these professionals are only coming up with these ideas so that they can get high paying jobs afterwards.

It does not matter to them if Service Brokerage works or not, as it does not affect them.

If Service Brokerage does not work, it will be worse for disabled people than the people at Good Impressions Publishing Ltd.

This means that disabled people should have more of a say on ideas like Service Brokerage than anyone else.

**Part Two: Service Brokerage – the Conference**

Good Impressions Publishing decided to have a conference in Salford to talk about their ideas.

Ken decides to go and ask them questions about what he is worried about.

Some of the people involved in putting on the event were David Brandon, Prof. Nancy Marlett and Noel Towe.

Ken Lumb says that during this meeting, there were lots of pamphlets and booklets explaining how great Service Brokerage could be.

In these booklets, they used the same words and arguments that disabled people have used in the Disabled People’s Movement for years.

This makes it seem like the people at Good Impressions Publishing are listening to disabled people and respect what they want to happen.

Ken Lumb thinks that they are using these words to seem forward-thinking but really are not listening to disabled people at all.

Ken says that the people at Good Impressions Publishing are ignoring what Disabled People’s Organisations are saying about care services and are not working with them.

Ken says that out of 38 people attending the meeting, only 3 were disabled people and 3 were carers.

Everyone else there worked for the government, or a charity or private care company.

Ken says that this just shows that Good Impressions Publishing don’t actually care what disabled people think about Service Brokerage.

Ken also notices that at the conference there were no accessible formats of information like Sign Language interpreters, braille or enlarged print.

This shows that they see disabled people as an afterthought and are using their issues to push their idea of Service Brokerage through.

Ken says that when he tried to bring up these issues in a question, the hosts rushed to shut him up.

This made Ken angry, as a disabled person, his opinions were not allowed to be shared with other people in the meeting.

If Good Impressions Publishing were as keen disabled people being heard as they say they are, they would speak openly to them.

Instead, they don’t even listen when disabled people come to talk to them.