

NEWS

Scientology links with rehabilitation group

A GROUP which runs a national drug rehabilitation programme and gives regular lectures to schools is closely linked to the controversial Church of Scientology.

Narconon, which bases its methods on the teachings of the Church's founder L Ron Hubbard, currently treats a small number of private-paying addicts each year. But it has recently launched a major expansion programme, and Narconon claims that Tower Hamlet's social services department has paid the £500 per week fee for the three month treatment of a drug addict.

Scientology, founded during the Fifties, has thousands of followers and has come under repeated criticism for its recruitment methods and practices. In 1984 Mr Justice Latey, in a custody battle at the High Court, said Scientology was, "Corrupt, sinister and dangerous. It is corrupt because it is based on lies and deceit and has, as its real objective, money and power."

The Church's growth has alarmed established drug rehabilitation organisations who have cast doubt on Narconon's methods as well as their regular visits to schools.



L Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder

Hugh Dufficy, deputy director of The Standing Conference on Drug Abuse, an association of drug agencies nation-wide, said that Narconon's rehabilitation methods, including exercise and taking saunas, were dubious. "It's difficult to say how effective they are as I haven't seen any kind of independent evaluation. We have

warned Mr Dufficy, was particularly worrying because addicts are at their most vulnerable during rehabilitation. "They are very susceptible to ideas. We have to discover whether the process they go through is leading people into a religious situation."

John Wood, president of the

always been sceptical of Narconon because of the link with Scientology and particularly because they do not make this clear."

He added that he would advise schools against allowing Narconon to talk to children. "I have been getting calls from schools all over the south east which have been approached by Narconon. I don't think a one off visit can help children. Proper teachers should be trained so drug education can be ongoing," he said.

Narconon's link with Scientology,

Tunbridge Well's-based Narconon said that the group had no formal links with the Church of Scientology but admitted that many of the staff were members of the Church. "Everything we use was developed by Ron Hubbard," he said. "The whole philosophy of Scientology is very anti-drugs. We are not religious at all."

But he added that any addicts in the process of recovery are welcome to find out more about Scientology after the three month programme. "If someone says 'this programme has really helped get me off drugs when nothing has helped me before, who is this Ron Hubbard? I want to know more about him,' then we would tell them. But we are not here to encourage people to become Scientologists."

Mr Wood rejected suggestions that Narconon should make its links with the Church of Scientology more explicit. "I don't think it's necessary. All that matters is that we are effective." He also defended Narconon's school visits, saying that they gave children the opportunity to meet addicts first hand.

Ian Hawarth of the Cult Information Centre, which monitors religious groups recruiting members through deception and mind control, said, "We are extremely concerned about the activity of Narconon."

ANTHONY MIDDLETON

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NEWS

Tower Hamlets "duped by Scientology rehab group"

NARCONON, THE drug rehabilitation group which has close links with the controversial Church of Scientology, allegedly "duped" Tower Hamlets Council into referring an alcoholic to them.

Both the Council and the drug agency which placed the addict on Tower Hamlet's behalf said that they would not be referring anyone else to the group.

The Church of Scientology has been consistently criticised by cult watchdogs for its recruitment techniques and financial dealings. Narconon's rehabilitation method is based on the teachings of L Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder. *The Big Issue* reported last week that the organisation wanted to expand its operation and Narconon's president John Wood announced then that it had gained its first referral from a council social services department.

Before gaining the Tower Hamlets client, Narconon had relied on private patients who could afford the £7,000 fee. Tapping into the subsidised social services

referral system would massively increase the number of potential customers for Narconon, as well as giving it official credibility.

But a spokesperson for Tower Hamlets Council, which was first alerted to the client's presence at Narconon by *The Big Issue*, said, "No one was aware of Narconon's connection with the Church of Scientology, but we would not be willing to pay for rehabilitation with an agency with those connections."

Andy Bullivant, finance director of Tower Hamlets Association of Alcohol Services and Problems (THAASP), which refers alcoholics to detox centres on behalf of the Council, said that THAASP had not known about the group's connections with Scientology when it agreed to pay £750 for a 10-day detox programme.

This only became apparent when he visited Narconon's centre. "It was obvious that everything was based on L Ron Hubbard's teachings," he said. "I told John Wood that we would pull the client out after one more week. If we had

known about the connection in the first place we wouldn't have referred the client to this project. We were duped."

In a written statement to *The Big Issue*, John Wood denied that Narconon had misled THAASP or Tower Hamlets Council. "The only reason they selected Narconon was because they had heard that we were successful."

Later asked if any of Narconon's clients had gone on to join the Church of Scientology, he replied, "I know that a small proportion of addicts cured by Narconon have gone on to take courses with the Church of Scientology."

Ian Haworth of the Cult Information Service, which monitors the activities of groups which recruit members through mind control and deception, said, "It is understandable that the social services were not aware of Narconon's connection with the Church of Scientology. I would hope that this sort of thing doesn't happen again."

ANTHONY MIDDLETON