

# York Older People's Assembly

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## MENTAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENTS IN YORK

The new Foss Park Mental Health Hospital in Haxby Road replacing Bootham Park, opened on the 21st April.

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Trust, responsible for services in the York area, together with Wates Construction, should be congratulated for delivering this new building on time and within budget.

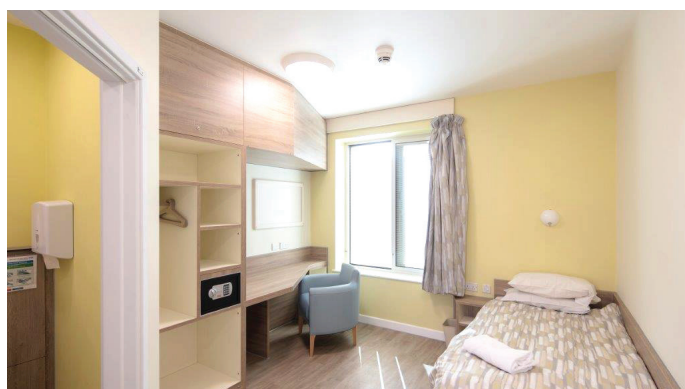
The hospital provides 72 beds over 4 wards. Two of the wards are specifically for older people:

Wold View – for people with Dementia.

Moor Croft – for people with mental health conditions such as psychosis, severe depression or anxiety.

All wards provide ground floor, single bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms. Each ward has access to outdoor garden areas and multiple therapy spaces. The whole scheme cost over £40 million and has been designed with full service user, staff and carer involvement.

Initially the hospital will take patients currently occupying Pepper Mill Court at Ramsay Close, Huntington Road, Meadowfields at Nelson's Lane, Dringhouses and Cherry Tree House at Fifth Avenue, Tang Hall.



The future of the buildings vacated is at present uncertain.

The hospital also provides a “Place of Safety” for those who have been detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

We must now redefine the categories of mental health we need to address. What will Co-vd 19 and the lockdown, deaths of relatives and friends, loss of income and employment do to mental health? How many people are likely to be in each category? How many people are currently well supported, and how many not? How many people could be well supported at home and how many in care homes?

These and other questions form the challenge for the future. What part has Bootham Park got to play, if any?

# COUNCIL BACKS DOWN OVER FUNERALS

The controversial decision by the Council to close the Crematorium and force mourners to attend a service in the grounds under a gazebo has been overturned.



The Assembly joined with the local MP Rachael Maskell and many thousands who signed a petition objecting to the plans. Given that the legal guidance about funeral services during the lock down was explicit and limited to:

- members of the deceased household
- close family members
- if no one in the above categories is attending, a friend of the deceased.

It was extraordinary the council should decide to ignore the guidance. We believe that loved ones should have the right to say goodbye in a dignified way and at a suitable venue. Gazebos in the garden do not meet that criteria. Fortunately the return to the use of the crematorium and chapel occurred on the 1st June.

## TEST, TRACE, TRACK - IS IT A SCAM?

The test and trace initiative is being rolled out mainly by phone contact, to those who have been in contact with someone suspected of showing the symptoms of Covid-19.

The Fraud Intelligence Service have issued the following warning:

*Contact Tracers will never*

- ask you to dial a premium rate number to speak to them
- ask you to make any form of payment
- ask for any details about your bank account
- ask for any passwords or PIN numbers
- ask you to purchase a product
- ask you to download any software to your phone or PC
- ask you to access any website that does not belong to the NHS.

If in doubt hang up, genuine tracers are only using a single phone number 0300 013 5000

## FREE ADVOCACY SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

The need for advocacy support was one of the main issues raised in the Armed Forces Covenant survey undertaken last year. Older Citizen Advocacy York (OCAY) are offering such a service to those over 50 living in the York area.

A team of 30 volunteers, many of whom have served in the Forces, can support people with issues such as benefit applications, contacting or making complaints to local companies, writing letters, and getting access to local services.

Contact OCAY: [info@ocay.org.uk](mailto:info@ocay.org.uk) or telephone 01904 – 676200 or mobile no: 07715 099493.

# CARE HOMES SCANDAL

During the Coronavirus Pandemic, the needs of care homes have been ignored and they have felt totally abandoned. Nursing and residential care homes should be the safest place for many older and vulnerable citizens. Public Health England stated in March, “Care Home Residents were very unlikely to become infected by Covid-19”.

How wrong they were! Up to 45% of all deaths due to the virus have occurred in care homes! Outbreaks have been recorded in 22 of the 37 care homes in York – a huge 60%.

Care home managers have said that “the safety and well-being of our residents and staff is our utmost priority”, however, homes have been deprived of adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and testing of staff and residents has been woefully inadequate, despite assurances from the Government. The discharge of patients from hospital have occurred with no testing taking place before entry into a care home. It has been left to the care homes to pick up the pieces.

Only Sheffield has been worse affected than York in the whole of Yorkshire. One is left to wonder whether the NHS is indeed a National Health Service or a National Hospital Service! Once things have returned to some sense of normality a full enquiry will be necessary to establish why those living in care homes have been treated as second class citizens.



# COVID-19 CRISIS – WHO PAYS?

Currently pensions rise by the greater of the increase in prices, average earnings or 2.5%. This is known as the “triple lock”.

Over the recent past State Pension have risen faster than either the growth in earnings or prices. This brings UK pensions nearer to the average of all other European Nations.

Proposals have been floated to abandon the “triple lock” ensuring the sharing of the costs of the huge Government Deficit is fairly balanced between old and young. If such a proposal was accepted removing the 2.5% promise would save an estimated £20 billion over 5 years. With those who are older or vulnerable being most affected by the proposals, this is no time to suggest they pay with their pensions – they have already paid with their lives!

It is however, reported that the Prime Minister stated the Government would maintain the “triple lock” on Pensions. Do we believe him and if so for how long?

# 50+ FESTIVAL

Regrettably, due to Covid-19 the festival has been cancelled for this year. We are looking forward to holding the festival next year.



# CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION 1

In these difficult times it is heartening that some news stories affecting older people are a cause for celebration.

Take Judi Dench. Born in Heworth and attending the Mount School she has always been a York favourite. At the age of 85 she has appeared on the front cover of "Vogue Magazine" not a publication known for its focus on older people. With her jaunty pixie haircut and sparkling blue eyes, this cover star proves that vitality exists far beyond youth.

Society sidelines older women given their style, wit and energy, at their peril.



## CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION 2

Or Elwyn Hughes at 96 living at Connaught Court residential home in Fulford. Having served in the army in the 2nd World war he has fought and overcome the deadly coronavirus. He can now return to his lifetime trade as the longest serving tailor in Britain. Whilst most would have laid down their "tools of the trade" - not so for Elwyn, who continues to provide a tailoring service to residents within Connaught Court.



## CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION 3

Or David Hume who celebrated his 100th birthday by being serenaded by an army bugler outside his home at Vyner House in Acomb. Another war veteran, David served with the 14th/20th Kings Hussars and saw service in a number of hostile locations before taking part in the Italian Campaign.

One phrase says it all "Age shall not wither them".



## FREE TV LICENCE FOR THOSE OVER 75

The ending of the free TV licence for those over 75 was due on the 31st May, 2020. The BBC have now extended this by just 8 weeks until the 1st August. Only those who receive Pension Credit will continue to receive their TV Licence free.

It is a small victory for common sense when older people are being told to stay at home during the Covid-19 crisis.

