

Representation from St George's Friends and Service Users to Peterborough City Council's (PCC) Cabinet concerning the future of the hydrotherapy pool

1. Reasons for re-opening the pool – health

1.1 St George's Community Hydrotherapy Pool has had a positive impact on over 4,500 PCC registered service users' health.

1.2 250 people of all ages (<1 – 94 years) were paying to access the pool each week. That's 12,500 PCC pool visits per year (50 weeks).

1.3 Service users come from every ward in the city. 9/10 wards where most users live are also the most deprived (ranked 1, 2 or 3 IMD 2019¹) in Peterborough.

1.4 85% of St George's users have a disability or long-term health condition with 33% a learning disability too. 15 % were using the pool for rehabilitative purposes. Over 60% of users say that their disability or health condition limits their day-to-day activities "a lot."

1.5 For many users, St George's was the only, or the main way to be physically active or to be rehabilitated.

1.6 There is no other hydrotherapy pool in the area.

It has been said that patients can be referred to Addenbrooke's. However, we understand that NHS hydrotherapy will not be provided unless there is a local facility.² In addition, we have been advised that Addenbrooke's hydrotherapy pool is not currently operating.

1.7 Evidence of some of the health benefits St George's delivers to its users.

In our survey (N=234) for whom it was relevant:

- 97.5%% of St George's users said that their physical health had greatly improved or improved as result of using the pool
- 98.5% said their mental wellbeing had greatly improved or improved
- 95% that their pain had greatly improved or improved because of using the pool
- 95% of users said that their mobility had greatly improved or improved
- 93% of users said their independence had greatly improved or improved
- 93% said that St George's was an important source of social contact

¹ English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019

² Cambridge and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group Hydrotherapy Policy V3 Jan 2022.

1.8 Benefits to the wider health and social care economy included:

- 70% of those for whom it was applicable, and 36% of all survey respondents, reported that they had reduced the number of visits that they made to their general practitioner (GP) as result of hydrotherapy.
- 44% of those for whom this was applicable, and 23% of all survey respondents reported that they had been able to reduce their intake of medication as result of hydrotherapy.
- 49% of those for whom this was applicable, and 27% of all survey respondents reported that they were using the pool to avoid or postpone surgery or hospital procedures

1.9 For the full health report including users' testimonials, please visit - <https://bit.ly/2CkCacl>

1.10 To find out more about the impact hydrotherapy can have - Dominic's story (3:25) <https://youtu.be/Y8hYlqGEKLQ>

1.11 In contrast to this, while the pool has been closed, we hear that many users' physical and mental health has significantly deteriorated. Shared with permission, here is what one user says:

*"Since the Pool had to close my disability has worsened and I became unable to sit & bedbound, following a much-awaited procedure on my spine I should have been back in my wheelchair and hopefully on crutches eventually. BUT the only way to do that would be by exercising in the WARM water of St George's (or any other hoist accessible, **affordable** hydrotherapy Pool). Unfortunately with nothing available I am left bed-bound, with a "very expensive" device (NHS provided) in my back which I can't make the most of, in a **lot of pain** (permanently on **Morphine**) **AND** now I have type 2 Diabetes as a result of unavoidable weight gain through lack of movement!!*

That doesn't include the effect on my Mental Health!

*Imagine Covid Isolation, but **only** in your bed, that is and has been my life since St George's shut."*

2. Reasons for re-opening the pool - financial

2.1. The sale of St George's to aquatic physiotherapist, Mr Mahamani, appeared in Phase 1 of 22/23 Budget Proposals which were voted through by Full Council. It was obviously considered a good financial proposal then.

2.2 The Council has stated that it cannot afford to pay the preparation costs for the sale. However, the sale price would compensate for this. The Briefing Note for the Extraordinary Meeting 23rd May includes costs caused by a proposed expansion. However, we understand Mr Mahamani had withdrawn this requirement, meaning

the costs for preparing the site for sale would be reduced. Mahamani has said this cost would be around £40k to prepare the site for a £105k sale. That's potentially a £65k PCC profit.

2.3 Following the sale, the refurbishment, the re-opening, and the future running costs would be at Mr Mahamani's expense. And he'd be contributing business rates. There would be no cost to PCC.

2.4 In contrast, mothballing St George's means PCC incurs maintenance costs.

2.5 St George's purposefully conservative and robust, evaluative Social Return on Investment (SROI) showed when open, the pool delivered £1,525,000 economic and social value to Peterborough per year. That was £16 of value for every £1 invested. This included savings to Adult Social Care. While closed, this value to Peterborough is lost.

Outcomes	Total value for outcome (£)
1.Pool Users	
1.1 Improved quality of life	71,000
1.2 Improved health and well-being	276,775
1.3 Improved social network	279,762
2. NHS	
2.1 Reduction in number of falls	262,196
2.2 Reduction in the number of visits to GP - NHS costs	21,489
2.3 Reduction in number of items prescribed by GP - NHS costs	1,661
2.3 Reduction in hospital visits and treatment costs - NHS costs	463,444
3. The State	
3.1 Reduction in employment costs	22,442
3.2 Reduction in care needs	126,145
TOTAL	1,524,916

2.6 To view the full report - <https://bit.ly/3txm21C>

2.7 The local community has been involved and invested in St George's in so many ways. Through St George's Friends and Service Users, residents have donated over £25k of support in the form of equipment and refurbishments. The Friends were planning to buy a tracked ceiling hoist as our contribution towards the newly refurbished St George's pool. We think it's important, in so many ways, that we continue to be included and involved as stakeholders in the ongoing discussions please.

3. Reasons why the proposed sale to Ranjith Mahamani (Consult Physio Ltd) as previously agreed, continues to be viewed as a good choice by us

3.1 To retain the health benefits shown in section 1 for some of the city's most vulnerable residents.

3.2 For the financial reasons in section 2. After the preparation costs for the sale, there would be no further cost to the council but all the benefits instead.

3.3 The sale negotiations which took place over several months included St George's hydrotherapy users and their views. We supported the sale. We thought for the future, it was the right and pragmatic thing to do. It seemed in the best interests of everyone.

3.4 The agreement included a guarantee of 20 hours of community access to the hydrotherapy pool per week at affordable prices. These would only rise in line with the retail price index.

3.5 Mr Mahamani is a qualified aquatic physiotherapist. He had been hiring St George's pool for patients every week for the past eight years. He had trained staff and operating systems ready. He was planning to run the pool in a suitably professional way.

3.6 Mr Mahamani planned to refurbish the pool and had already involved pool users' views.

3.7 If valuations or circumstances have changed for this deal, has any attempt been made to renegotiate it?

3.8 If required, on behalf of the service users, we would urge this. We would like every option to be explored.

4. Heltwate School

4.1 We can absolutely sympathise with pressure Heltwate School finds itself in receiving pupils with more complex needs.

4.2 But does the cost of this expansion have to be closing the city's only community hydrotherapy pool? We would like the following to be considered please:

4.3 Pupils from Heltwate School, and other Peterborough Schools, benefitted from using St George's Hydrotherapy Pool. The more complex the pupils' needs; the greater the need for hydrotherapy to be provided. Not only for when these pupils are in school, but for when these young people leave.

4.4 St George's is small; it consists mostly of the pool hall, a plant room and two changing rooms. These would undoubtedly be difficult and costly to convert into a useable school space.

4.5 Does Heltwate's new build at Bretton offer any potential for expansion?

4.6 Or, to the side of the Heltwate St George's School, there is some flat overgrown ground that belongs to it. It's not St George's. Please see photographs below.



Figure 1 Heltwate land from Lawn Avenue



Figure 2 Heltwate land from St Paul's Road

Could this area be suitable for expansion?

4.7 The loss of the only community hydrotherapy pool for the city's residents and for the rising number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (apart from those at Lime Academy), seems retrograde and potentially short-sighted. Especially if there are alternatives for expansion, or if the expansion is a temporary measure, as no decision has been made on whether the school will eventually relocate.

4.8 In 2018, plans were successfully passed to build a joint Heltwate School and St George's Community Hydrotherapy Pool at Newark Road. If the builder Carillion had not gone into liquidation, Heltwate would have new school and the city a new community hydrotherapy pool. Following this, we should be doing everything possible to salvage the very best outcomes for both the school and the city's hydrotherapy users.

5. Conclusion

5.1 We would like St George's to re-open as soon as practicably possible please.

5.2 As per our petition, we would firstly urge the resumption of sale negotiations with Mr Mahamani.

5.3 If then required, we would encourage and support the exploration of all other options with Mr Mahamani.

5.4 If then required, all other options for re-opening the pool should be explored.

5.5 On behalf of the service users, we would be pleased to be involved and to support this to a successful conclusion wherever possible.