

Part 2 Representation from St George's Friends and Service Users to Peterborough City Council's (PCC) Cabinet concerning the future of the hydrotherapy pool

This additional representation is in response the hydrotherapy update provided at Full Council on 22nd June.

1. St George's Friends and Service Users welcomes the news that the cabinet is exploring all options for delivering hydrotherapy in the city and will be consulting with the service users' group. Thank you.

2. We were surprised at the presumption that St George's hydrotherapy users have found alternative venues.

2.1 These are examples of the responses received from users who watched the livestream:

"I was astonished to hear Cllr Steve Allen declare that the St. George's users had made other arrangements for hydrotherapy locally. Could we ask him to NAME ONE PLACE where this is possible for the St. George's users to replicate what was available, please? As he is so certain that this has been done it should be easy for him to share this information."

"I can categorically state that I have found no alternative hydrotherapy provision and have not used one since closure. I would be interested to know why Cllr Allen thinks it is so obvious that we have found alternative hydrotherapy."

2.2 We know users are very keen to return to being active and managing their health and wellbeing at St George's hydrotherapy pool.

"I have not found an alternative for the hydro pool. As I said in my story on the St George's website, it was somewhere for me to be able to lift my children and have fun with them without any mobility issues which I have on dry land. As a family, we are distraught not to have the access to St George's Hydro Pool."

3. We were concerned and disappointed that the announcement at Full Council to trial "hydrotherapy" at the Regional's teaching pool was made without any consultation with us.

4. However, at our request, a much-appreciated site visit to the teaching pool at the Regional Fitness Centre was granted. This was to see if it could be a suitable alternative for St George's hydrotherapy users.

4.1 The site visit took place on 28th June. Two senior staff members of Peterborough Ltd, two PCC councillors, and two St George's service users were present.

4.2 *The conclusion of the site visit was that the training pool would **not** be a suitable alternative for St George's users. We think we can say that this conclusion was universally agreed amongst us all.*

Reasons why the teaching pool is not suitable include:

5.1 The teaching pool is not deep enough.

- Its depth is 0.75m (2ft 5") - 0.90m (2ft 11").
- To provide adequate support for hydrotherapy exercise a pool would need to be 1.20m (4ft) - 1.50m (4ft 11") deep (chest height).
- St George's, which of course was originally built as children's hydrotherapy pool, is 0.80m (2ft 7") - 1.20m (4ft) deep.
- This problem of depth is increased by the fact that hydrotherapy users would need to share the pool with school swimmers (not ideal in so many ways) and St George's users would need to be placed in the shallow, 0.75m (2ft 5") end.
- A hydrotherapy user who attempted to use the teaching pool when St George's was closed for repairs in 2017 wrote:

"Tried the children's pool while we were shut for pool maintenance but I found it no use as not deep enough to do exercises I wanted to do. Did nothing to help me."

5.2 The teaching pool is too cold.

- The teaching pool operates at around 31°C.
- A hydrotherapy pool requires a water temperature of 33 - 35.5°C. St George's generally operated at 35.5°C.
- It would be difficult for staff to raise the temperature because:
 - It would be too hot for the school and swimming class pupils.
 - Owing to the current shortage of chlorine, pools are being advised to keep water temperatures down.

5.3 The teaching pool is not easily accessible for anyone requiring hydrotherapy.

- The pool is accessed by ladders or a set of steps without a handrail.
- This means most hydrotherapy users would need to use a hoist. Being able to access a pool independently is of great importance to many users. Having to use the hoist, when normally able to access independently, would be a deterrent.

- The poolside hoist does not have the seat fittings required by many of St George's users. For example, slings.
- Transport from changing rooms to the poolside hoist would be difficult as an additional mobile hoist would be required. This is sited elsewhere. There are no shower trolleys.
- There is no handrail around the inside the pool. "Handrails are an essential requirement for hydrotherapy pools as they enable therapeutic treatment techniques which require the patient to use them for support." ATACP 2019



Figure 1 Teaching pool

6. Difficulties of timetabling hydrotherapy sessions in the teaching pool:

- Hydrotherapy sessions could only take during school sessions - 9am - 3pm. It would require sharing the pool by dividing it in half with hydrotherapy users at the shallow end.
- This is not ideal for the schools or hydrotherapy users. If required, further information can be supplied.
- There might be a whole-pool, hour-long hydrotherapy slot at a lunchtime, when the schools are not present. However, two disabled changing rooms would be unlikely to meet demand.
- There would be no provision for any aquatic physiotherapy advice or service during such sessions.

7. Reasons why the Regional Fitness Centre is not best suited to host hydrotherapy sessions

7.1 Changing rooms:

- The men's and women's changing rooms are not accessible. (Information can be supplied.)
- There are two accessible changing rooms.
- These would not be sufficient for a public hydrotherapy session.

7.2 The teaching pool is sited on the first floor

- It needs to be accessed by the stairs or the lift.
- For all hydrotherapy users with mobility problems, this would cause additional access difficulties.
- The width of the entrance to the lift was less than the required standard for wheelchair access. (Information can be supplied.)
- So many hydrotherapy users with mobility difficulties and wheelchairs accessing the teaching pool at one time, could pose an evacuation problem.

7.3 Length of walking distance required to access the teaching pool

- The shortest distance to the pool from the closest Blue Badge car parking space (5 spaces) was approximately 110m. That's a minimum of 220m for both journeys.
- 89% of St George's users report a mobility problem. A previous survey of St George's users found 85% were entitled to a Blue Badge. Generally this might mean someone experienced great difficulty walking more than 50m (DWP PIP).
- We did not find out how far someone might be required to walk if unable to obtain a Blue Badge parking space.
- The number of doors - especially for someone in a wheelchair - made the journey through the building to and from the pool difficult too.
- In contrast, the estimated walking distance to the pool at St George's is between 10m (drop-off point) to 20m (far car park).

8. As there has not been an opportunity to consult with hydrotherapy users, these represent just some of reasons that the teaching pool would not be suitable.

9. Any questions or clarifications on the points raised are welcome.

10. This is a super pool for teaching children; it is not a hydrotherapy pool.