

History Information

Rampton Hospital, Forensic Services



*Positive about mental health
and learning disability*

History Information

Time has not stood still for Rampton Hospital. Now nearly 100 years old, it has seen the face of forensic health care change beyond recognition. Witness to two world wars, sweeping legislative changes and the policies of numerous Governments, it has progressed from state asylum to high security hospital, from an isolated and often secret institution to a centre of medical excellence that has become internationally recognised, and part of a mainstream NHS Trust, the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

Origins

The Hospital's story starts at the turn of the century. At that time Broadmoor state institution was providing residence for all the country's mentally disordered offenders, in compliance with the Criminal Lunatics Act 1860. As numbers increased however it became clear that further accommodation was needed. A site in the north of England was proposed, which it was felt had 'some special advantages'. The location was the isolated village of Woodbeck in north Nottinghamshire; the advantages were its isolation and its abundant supply of fresh water.

The new state asylum opened on the 1 October 1912. Designed by the architect Frances William Troup, the 300 bed institution had taken just three years to build. It comprised three central wards, one workshop (to house upholsterers, carpenters, shoemakers and tailors), a laundry, kitchen and sewing room, sewage plant, boiler house and rooms for the Home Office. Initially it was home to 88 men and 40 women, all transfers from its older sister, Broadmoor Hospital and was manned by just 8 male attendants and 13 nurses. The wage for attendants was the princely sum of £18 per annum, with uniform, board and lodging, for a 60 hour week.

Legislation was to alter the profile of the institution's population in 1913 with the introduction of the Mental Deficiency Act. This established a Board of Control with responsibilities for the supervision, protection and control of patients with learning disabilities, who showed dangerous or violent tendencies.

By the end of World War I Rampton Hospital had more that doubled in size. It now had its own farm and a boundary wall had been erected. Various agricultural enterprises were tried out including dairying, pigs and poultry – at one time more than 600 hens and 500 pigs were kept on site. Vegetable growing, however, proved by far the most successful practice.

Growth

Expansion continued with the admission of patients from Moss Side institution in Merseyside and Warwick Prison. By 1939 almost all the estate buildings used today had been constructed. All the villas date from this period, as does the recreation hall, which, it was frequently said, had the best dance floor in the country.

Up until World War II no one was allowed to live off the job. Hospital estate cottages were rented out at 5s. 6d per week. Women had to resign on marriage, and staff could be given just twenty minutes notice of dismissal. In both cases there was no right of appeal.

Throughout the thirties the number of patients continued to increase, and by the forties the official bed complement had risen to an all-time high of around 1,300. The staff to patient ratio, however, remained low at an average of eleven to one on wards, and thirteen to one on villas. Hardly surprising, escapes from the institution were not unusual during this period, with numbers reaching the annual record figure of forty two in 1939. By the fifties numbers had dropped to an annual average of fifteen, but this did not allay the fears of local residents.

The early thirties saw the admission, for the first time, of children. Deemed untreatable elsewhere, many were encephalitis 'sleeping sickness' cases: their average age was twelve. The children's section was discontinued in the mid 50's.

Ownership of the institution moved to the Ministry of Health in 1948, even though it continued to be the responsibility of the Board of Control. But the change did bring about one important alteration; now, for the first time, Rampton had officially become a hospital.

The Mental Health Act of 1959 brought in far more sweeping changes. Abolishing the statutory distinctions between mental illness and mental deficiency, it outlined for the first time the role of what would become known as the 'Special' Hospital. Out went the Board of Control, in came the Department of Health and Social Security, and more importantly new Mental Health Review Tribunals to review the status of patients in care.

In the early sixties the then Minister for Health, Enoch Powell, granted major investment to the Hospital, which, he announced, was to become the 'showplace of the department'. New on-site sports facilities in the shape of an outdoor arena and indoor gymnasium were built: a swimming pool was to follow. Up until this time all sports events had been held outside the Hospital's walls and patients had to earn 'field privileges' in order to attend. Sport formed a major part of Hospital life. For patients there were annual sports meeting, with prizes for being hotly contested, and staff too were fiercely competitive, with their own semi-professional cricket, football, bowls and running teams. There was a staff-patient brass band, which played at various venues throughout the district and the decade also fulfilled the Hospital's spiritual needs, with the dedication of a new chapel in 1968.

Change

Legislative history was to repeat itself in the 1970s with the National Health Service Act of 1977. This largely re-enacted the act of 1959. However, the Hospital had other more pressing matters to deal with following Yorkshire Television's damning film 'The Secret Hospital', which alleged the ill treatment of patients by staff.

Bad publicity had courted the Institution since its earliest years. Nicknamed 'Broadmoor of the North' by the local press, its reputation for secrecy was perhaps the inevitable result of being a largely closed community. Many staff lived on site (a mandatory requirement up until 1945), and so the Hospital's working were largely a matter of conjecture for the rest of the local population.

Nevertheless, the film could not be dismissed as idle hearsay and as a result a commission headed by Sir John Boynton was set up to look

into the workings of the organisation. The review was a turning point for the Hospital in that it examined practices that had been in place for many decades. Seven working groups spent a year interviewing members of staff. The subsequent report highlighted the problems of providing 'security and treatment'. It recommended a sweeping review of the Hospital's management structure with a view to introducing greater clinical and professional input into its leadership; the introduction of more flexible regimes on certain central wards and greater flexibility in patients' individual treatment programmes. It suggested a more relaxed uniform style and greater dialogue between the Hospital and the community, both in professional, nursing and social terms.

Another recommendation of the Boynton inquiry was increased integration of patients. A practice that had persisted up until the late 1960s, segregation had kept male and female patients apart at all times other than at church services (even then they had to sit at opposite sides of the hall). To remedy the situation integrated discos, bingo nights and sports events were introduced.

Education – both patient and staff – flourished in the 1970s. Dedicated patients classrooms were introduced in 1970, and the new staff education centre was opened in 1976, replacing a nurse training school of 1950. The ultimate academic accolade followed in the early 1990s, when the Hospital was awarded Associate College status by Sheffield Hallam University.

Population decline was a feature of the Hospital in the 1980s, with a dramatic fall in patient numbers from around 800 in the early 80s to around 550 in 1990. The principal reason for this was the decrease in referrals from the Courts.

During the eighties the Mental Health Act Commissioners had been overseeing the Hospital, following the 1983 Mental Health Act. However, in 1989 a new authority, the Special Hospitals Service Authority, took charge. New strategies for managing the service were drawn up, highlighting the need for a better balance between quality and security of care. Rampton Hospital was selected, for the first time, as a centre for the care of patients with severe learning disabilities and the capital

investment was granted for the building of new central wards.

On 21 June 1995, John Bowis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, gave a written parliamentary answer outlining the future funding and organisation of high security psychiatric services for England and Wales.

The changes he announced were the outcome of the recommendations of the expert group chaired by Dr John Reed which publicised its report, known as Reed II, in 1994.

The overall purpose of the changes were to integrate the special hospital services more closely with mainstream mental health services whilst fully maintaining the protection of the public, staff and patients themselves.

This meant the replacement of the Special Hospitals Service Authority (SHSA) by a National High Security Psychiatric Services Commissioning Board within the NHS Executive. This was responsible for commissioning services provided by the high security hospitals.

Of particular interest to Rampton Hospital was the establishment of a new special hospital authority with sole responsibility for its management on 1 April 1996. Like those established for Ashworth and Broadmoor Hospitals, this local management body gives in the words of the minister, "greater responsibility to the people who work in each hospital so that they are able to develop the organisation in ways that meet the needs of their patients and respond quickly on day to day matters affecting patients and staff".

Major capital investment was a feature of the early nineties. In December 1991 the Rosedale Centre (now called Dukeries) was opened at a cost of £2.3m, to provide daytime occupational therapy activities for male and female learning disability patients, including art, music and crafts. The centre has its own sensory relaxation environment, or 'Snoezelen' – a facility that has also been introduced onto

several other wards. A new central building providing three 18 bedded wards was also completed as part of a major ongoing refurbishment programme.

Increased emphasis on patient care and rehabilitation continued with the introduction of 24 hour patient care in late 1993 and integrated staff working on central wards in 1992.

In 1994 the Hospital reinforced its commitment to developing its workforce by gaining the Investors in People title through the national workplace initiative endorsed by many leading British companies, which aims to enhance the working practices of staff.

In February 2000 Rampton Hospital was awarded the prestigious Charter Mark award. This recognises quality in public services and is the government scheme designed to both reward excellence and encourage constant quality improvement. It is very much focused on the quality of the service provided to users; in Rampton Hospital this included not only patients but also visitors and the general public.

In April 2001 Rampton Hospital became part of the new Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust. The Trust provides mental health and learning disability services including:

- Community forensic service to Nottinghamshire
- Medium secure services provided by Arnold Lodge and Wathwood Hospital to patients from the Trent region
- A high secure service at Rampton Hospital for all NHS region

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