

## Lustrum Vale

### Q&As

Q. People are living longer, more people are suffering from dementia so it follows that there are more people needing hospital care. How can it be appropriate to close a ward?

A. Yes, more people are suffering from dementia but the way we provide health care is changing and, working with GPs, social services and other agencies, we're able to support more people in their home environment. This is better for the people who need our services who tell us they want to remain independent and at home for as long as possible.

The improvements we have made to the way we work such as removing delays from our assessment processes, mean that people are spending less time in hospital.

However, this is a temporary closure and we will monitor the situation carefully and re-open the ward if necessary.

Q. Why are you saying this is a temporary closure? Why don't you admit you're closing it permanently?

A. This is a temporary closure. However, if, as we expect, the reported lengths of stay and admission rates continue, then we and the PCT expect to hold a full public consultation about inpatient services for older people across the Tees Valley later this year. We would consult on a range of options and give local people the opportunity to give us their views

Q Is this a cost cutting exercise? What about the vulnerable people who need these services?

A. First and foremost this decision was not financially or managerially driven. We want to make sure that people get the care they need when and where they need it. Clinical staff – the doctors and nurses on the ward, have been making far reaching changes to the way they work to improve patient care and to enable more people to stay at home for longer and to return home more quickly. This has meant that occupancy on the ward has decreased dramatically and have a ward that is practically empty. We need to make sure that we make the best use of tax payer's money and we do not think that running an almost empty ward is the best use of our funds.

Q. You say you're reducing lengths of stay but does this mean that there's pressure to discharge people from hospital before they're ready for it?

A. Decisions about discharging people from hospital are always made by the clinicians involved in the individual's care and are based on clinical judgement.

Q. What about the families of these people who want to visit their relatives – you're asking them to travel another further to see them. Many of them will be old themselves and may not have their own transport – what do you have to say to them?

*A. In May last year our adult inpatient services moved from North Tees Hospital to Roseberry Park in Middlesbrough and we are not aware of any major difficulties for families. However, we recognise that this is a concern for people and we will be monitoring this over the coming months and would ask people to let us know if they're having problems. The issue of transport would be a key part of any subsequent consultation.*

Q. You're only looking at a period of six months, that's not very long. How do you know these improvements are sustainable?

A. Based on similar changes that have been made elsewhere in the trust we believe these improvements are sustainable. However, this is a temporary closure and we can re-open the ward if required.

Q. You talk about providing local services but surely this means that Stockton people are losing a service?

A. We understand that people in Stockton may be concerned about maintaining locally based services. We also want to make sure that people get the care and treatment they need as close to their home as possible. And for more people than ever this means being able to support them at home, rather than having to go into hospital. People tell us this is what they want.

But just to reiterate what has been said – this is a temporary closure and no decision about the future of the unit would be made without a full public consultation.

The number of older people from Stockton admitted to Lustrum Vale over the past 6 months has been only 37. This compares to 481 people referred for community based assessment and treatment over the same period.

Q. Do you have the community services available to support people at home?

A. Some of the staff from Lustrum Vale will be working in the Stockton Memory Service, the Liaison Service at North Tees Hospital and the Stockton Nursing Home Liaison team.

Q. How can you justify a modern building standing empty.

A. This is a temporary closure so it is important that Lustrum Vale remains empty in case we need to reopen it. However, we will be saving running costs such as electricity and heating and more importantly the staff will not be running an almost empty ward but will be providing much need services in the community and other inpatient wards.

However, the trust is continually reviewing and developing its services and if Lustrum was no longer needed to provide these inpatient services we would be able to make good use of this facility for other patient services to serve the local population.

Q. Have you asked local people what they want?

A. No decision will be made about the future of Lustrum Vale without a full public consultation and there will be plenty of opportunity for local people to get involved and give us their views