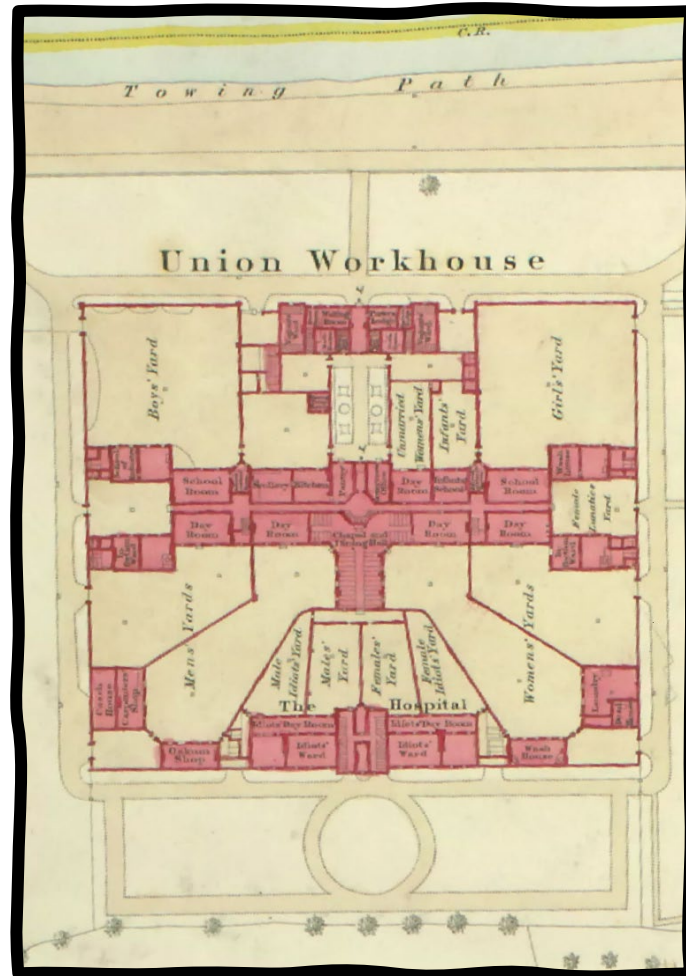


York Union Workhouse 1899.

Neglect reported in the newspaper.



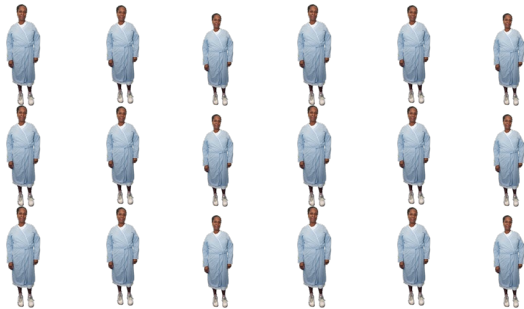
An Easy Read Summary by York People First,
November 2023.



York Union Workhouse on
Huntington Road was built
in 1848 to support to
people who could not
'provide' for, or look after
themselves.



Workhouses were run by a **'Board of Guardians'**, mostly men, who were elected by local 'rate, or tax payers'.



In 1881 York Union Workhouse housed 717 **'inmates'**.



People in the workhouse with a **learning difficulty** might have been called or **'certified'** as **'idiot'**, **'imbecile'**, **'weak minded'** or **'feeble minded'**. But these terms were not clear and used very differently.



In the newspaper **'The Yorkshire Herald'**, on Friday 24th November 1899 a meeting of the York Board of Guardians is reported.



The *Guardians* discuss 'comments made by the Inspectors of the Local Government Board respecting **the treatment of imbeciles in the workhouse**'.



There had been a report from the Local Government Board's '**Investigation Committee**' that looked at some problems at the York Union Workhouse.



The report by Mr Jenner Fust and Dr Fuller, Government Officials' said there were '**neglect in two cases**'.



At the meeting, the *Guardians* said that the problems are due to '**the Workhouse Master** not taking his proper position and carrying out his authority in a suitable manner'.



It says that part of the problems includes the **neglect of 'imbecile' inmates.**



It says that a '**Charles Hudson**' was afraid when the inspectors were present and would not speak to them.



There were concerns about three women wearing **dresses** that were '**complained**' about.



The committee says these dresses had been provided to stop them being torn up. Suggesting they were made of a **tough and uncomfortable material.**



Also, it the report notes of women's **hair** was being worn or **cut short.**



The *Guardians* reply, 'it has always been considered necessary for the purpose of **ensuring cleanliness** that the hair should be worn short'.



And that the 'hair was kept short for the sake of cleanliness, and if displeased **they would pull each other's, and even their own hair out**'.



The *Guardians*' 'reply to the official complaints', saying there will be '**some improvement** of the workhouse'.



Checking the 1881 Census, we see that a **Charles Hudson** is living in the Workhouse, aged 5. But in the 1891 there is no record of that name.



Checking the 1891 census records we can see recorded a '**Charlotte Lofthouse**, aged 11, Imbecile since birth', and a '**Sarah Dale**, aged 26, deaf and blind'.



In the 1901 Census both Charlotte and Sarah are recorded as living there, with Sarah's record now noting her as a 'Imbecile'.



We think about what it might have been like for Charlotte and Sarah, who they were and what their story was? **What their daily lives were like?** What they hoped for? What they feared?



We also think about the workhouse and while its doors are shut, we wonder **how different things are today** for people with learning difficulties?



We try to imagine a future without **ghettos and institutions** that segregate people with learning difficulties just because they happen to have that label.



And we are interested to know **what you think too?**



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