

# A Report on Patients' Experiences at Barnet Hospital



**July 2017**

## Introduction

Healthwatch Barnet was established through the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to give users of health and social care services a powerful voice both locally and nationally.

Healthwatch Barnet was established in 2013 and is part of a national network led by Healthwatch England. We are the independent voice for residents of Barnet who use health and social care services. Our vision is of a thriving and active community of Barnet people who want to influence and contribute to the development and delivery of quality health and social care in the borough.

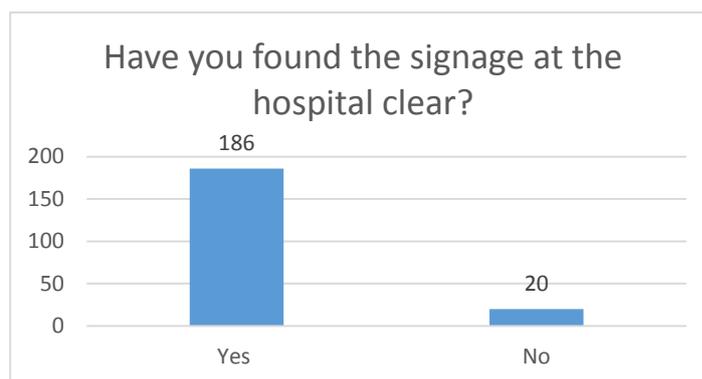
Healthwatch Barnet want to engage with a wide range of local people about their experience of Health and Social Care in Barnet. To this end we set up a series of stalls in the foyer of Barnet Hospital to talk to people as they attended the hospital. We undertook this engagement at the following times: morning of Tuesday 9 May, afternoon of Thursday 11 May, morning of Tuesday 16 May and afternoon of Thursday 18th May 2017.

We asked patients a small number of direct questions and also encouraged them to give us any more general comments about their experiences.

### **We asked people if they found the signage at the hospital easy to follow:**

206 patients gave us feedback on this with 90% saying the signage was clear and easy to follow. A number of people told us they had asked for directions or clarification at the front reception desk and they were very positive about the help they received from reception staff and volunteers. Several patients had been to the hospital before and knew where they needed to go.

Two suggestions that were made were to have better signage to the lifts, and a clearer indication of each floor/level you are on.



- "Signs are good and staff helpful at desk"
- "Front desk helpful"
- "Need to have signs so that people will know what level they are on"
- "Reception always helpful"
- "Help is available at the desk"
- "Always clear, I ask reception and they point me in the right direction"
- "Been coming here for years. I know where to go"
- "Suggest to put a sign pointing towards the lifts"

### We asked people how they had travelled to the hospital:

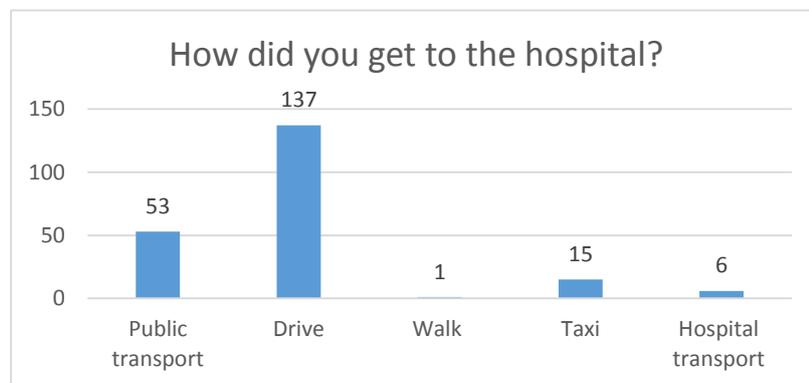
65% (137) of the 212 patients who answered this question, drove to the hospital.

73 people (53% of those who drove) said that they had experienced problems finding parking. A significant proportion of those who did not experience problems were patients who have been to the hospital before and told us they knew to find parking outside of the hospital car park in residential areas and then walk to the hospital.

Patients who used public transport said the hospital is easy to access.

15 (7% of participants) patients travelled to the site by taxi as they found the hospital too hard to access by public transport (too many changes of bus), or that they found parking too stressful.

Only 3 people mentioned travelling by underground.



- “Took a very long time to find a parking space. I almost missed daughters appointment”
- “No problems today as I parked on side road but last week I drove around the car park for over an hour and had to send my son in for appointment on his own. A teenager that I would have liked to be there with for the appointment”
- “No blue badge spaces available”
- “Parked outside today. Cars queuing in the car park, not acceptable. Stressed before you arrived”
- “Took 20 minutes to find a space and has had times where it took an hour. Very frustrating when you are driving around and see empty staff spaces”
- “Made me late for my appointment. I phoned and told them I will be late because of parking. I drove outside of the hospital and park down the road”
- “Have a disabled badge. Normally can’t get a space, I drop my husband outside the hospital and wait for a space”

### General Feedback

We received the following general feedback:

- “Hospital doing a great job”
- “Staff are supportive”
- “Hospital greatly improved over the last four years”

- “Discharged yesterday without antibiotics and discharge letter, had to come back to hospital today to collect antibiotics. I have been advised to contact PALS team”
- “Clinics usually on time, good caring staff, everything is good”
- “Had to wait a long time for in-clinic for blood tests”
- “No wait for X-ray today – excellent”

## Other Factors

Some local residents who live near the hospital have complained to the council about parking issues in residential roads and a consultation has been undertaken. Some Controlled Parking Zones are being developed and will be introduced in the near future. Although not covering the whole neighbouring residential area it will undoubtedly have an impact on the amount of on-street parking in the area and will increase the parking issues.

The shuttle bus which was operating between Royal Free in Hampstead and Barnet Hospital ceased in 2016, and in April 2017 the daily series of shuttle buses from Chase Farm and Barnet Hospital has been stopped. This will have an impact again on the parking situation, for staff as well as patients and is likely to again create further problems.

Subsidized car park permits are available for patients who are receiving regular treatment such as chemotherapy, and relatives of those receiving long term care in specialised wards, though these schemes are not well advertised. These schemes should be made apparent to patients who are in this situation, in an equitable way.

A number of patients have separately told us of difficulties in understanding the processes of registering for disabled parking at the site, and have received fines as a result. We appreciate that efforts have been made to make this clearer and hope that the information will continue to be reviewed to ensure it is understood by all.

This survey took place during pleasant spring weather so the number of people driving may be lower than during the winter months.

## Summary

The majority of patients were satisfied with the signage and overall experience at Barnet Hospital, with the exception of parking. This is clearly a significant issue for a substantial number of people.

## Recommendations

1. Review signage to the lifts.
2. Consider providing signage giving a clear indication of each floor/level for the current location.
3. Patients should be made aware of the difficulties with parking before they arrive for their appointments/visiting, and be given more information about public transport routes. This could be done on their appointment letter where appropriate. As Barnet has an apparently large, visible car park, there is an expectation by infrequent visitors that there is sufficient parking at all times, which leads to some very stressful situations. Prior warning of the issue may help alleviate this.
4. The Royal Free Trust should look at how they can address the parking issues by exploring options for extending the number of parking spaces available. Options that were suggested by people we spoke to are:
  - Revisit the option of building a multi-storey car park

- Discounted arrangements with taxi firms to run regular shuttles from High Barnet Tube Station to the hospital;
  - Park and Ride schemes;
  - Ensure that the maximum use of the space within the existing car park is made. Some barriers are currently taking up spaces and it may be possible to position these in a different way to free up more spaces.
  - To review the number of spaces allocated to staff only and ensure that the balance between staff and public is correct. At non peak staffing times ensure some flexibility is available.
5. Ensure that information about various subsidized parking schemes is available to all patients equitably.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our team of Healthwatch volunteers who assisted with this research: Sue Blain, Derrick Edgerton, Ganesh Dutt, Margaret Singer and Melvin Gamp.

## Response from Barnet Hospital

We have received the following response from the Director of Nursing at Barnet Hospital. We look forward to working with them in the future on these areas:

*I was very encouraged to read the positive responses from the patients and visitors your members surveyed and would like to thank you for sending me the report.*

*With reference to the 2 key areas for improvement I can confirm that we are planning to undertake a review of the general signage, in particular the directions to the lifts and clear notification of the individual floors.*

*With regard to car parking on the Barnet hospital site, we are currently in communication with the local council to explore some of the options outlined in your report in more detail. We will of course keep you updated on progress with these key areas.*