

NC London JHOSC Meeting 21 November 2014

Car Parking

Background

Patients and visitors had raised concerns with us and our neighbouring Healthwatch organisations about parking at NNUH, Chase Farm and Barnet hospitals. Concerns were primarily around the cost of parking, which is particularly an issue for those attending frequently, and ticket systems which mean guessing the length of stay on arrival. Issues have also been raised around difficulties with ticket machines and provision for disabled people (Blue badge holders).

Department of Health (DoH) guidance

The DoH issued new guidance in August which addressed these concerns <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles>. The guidance recommended concessions for certain categories of patient, 'pay on exit' arrangements and good publicity.

North Middlesex University Hospital (NNUH)

Together with Healthwatch Haringey we wrote to NNUH in September asking if they complied with the guidance and, if not, if any changes were planned. We explained that we were aware that they offered concessions for frequent patients and visitors and those attending for oncology and radiotherapy treatment or visiting the Maternity unit to give birth. We also said we were aware of a scheme for carers but couldn't find it easily on their website. We pointed out that these concessions were appreciated by local people but needed to be better publicised.

NNUH car parks require payment in advance which means that they do not comply with the new guidance so we asked if the Board would be considering a 'Pay on exit' scheme.

NNUH responded to say that the Trust did comply with the guidance and listed their various parking fee concessions. They stated that they favoured a pay-on-exit option but had been unable to implement this because planning permission had been refused. Their letter went on to say that management of all their car parks was being put out to tender

this autumn and new signage and more prominent information was included in the specification. The Trust would also be publishing a car parking strategy on their website and producing patient information leaflets.

Together with HW Haringey we replied to the Trust to say we welcomed the plans around signage and information and offered to assist with patient involvement in design. We offered our support for any future planning applications and suggested that this would provide an opportunity to review the tariffs which rise very steeply from 50p for 15mins (which people tell us is not long enough to collect an elderly relative) directly to £3.50 for 3 hours - with nothing in between.

We would suggest that O&S ask NNUH about progress with their parking strategy, re-tendering of parking management and new patient leaflets.

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (RF)

Together with **Healthwatch Barnet** we wrote a similar letter to RF in September. We said we were aware that the Trust offered reductions for those attending intensive care or paediatrics plus free parking for blue badge holders and that the Royal Free (Hampstead) had 'pay on exit' arrangements. We explained that we were concerned that 'pay on exit' arrangements were not in place at either Barnet or Chase Farm and asked what changes were planned for these sites to ensure compliance with the new Guidance.

The RF responded to say that they had a new parking policy which was based on the DoH Guidance. The details of the new arrangements were set out in their letter together with information about concessions. We carried out a site visit to Chase Farm to observe the operation of the scheme. Some visitors clearly found the new machines difficult but we appreciate that this is always likely to be the case with an unfamiliar set up. Overall the new arrangement seems much better.

However, we have had complaints from a number of blue badge holders attending Barnet hospital who have received PCNs despite displaying their badges. This is because the new arrangements require them to register their details on arrival and visitors unfamiliar with the scheme have not done this. We have raised this with the Trust (who have acted promptly to cancel PCNs) and suggested that volunteers could be asked to put leaflets explaining the need to register on the windscreens of all cars displaying a blue badge - until the scheme has bedded in.