

Temporary move of older person's assessment unit from Chase Farm Hospital to Barnet Hospital: update for Enfield Health Scrutiny Panel

9 October 2020

Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (RFL) has made temporary changes to some of its services to ensure patients receive the very best care.

This means that care may be temporarily delivered in a different location or virtually by video or telephone.

These changes will help make sure that we can continue to provide the best possible care for all of our patients, can restart services in a safe way and be prepared for the winter and a potential second surge in COVID-19 cases.

As part of these changes, the older person's assessment unit (OPAU) at Chase Farm Hospital has been temporarily moved to Barnet Hospital.

About the OPAU

The OPAU is a GP referral service which cares for patients aged 65 and over. The aim of this service is to avoid older people being admitted to hospital when they can take care of themselves at home with the necessary support.

A range of treatments are undertaken during a visit including diagnostic tests, such as blood transfusions, blood tests, x-rays and ECGs.

The unit has a multi-disciplinary team of health and social care professionals, led by a consultant geriatrician.

Where possible, the patient will be diagnosed and supported to return home.

Temporary location move

The OPAU was temporarily moved from Chase Farm Hospital to Barnet Hospital on Monday 22 June 2020.

This change was made in line with NHS England/Improvement pan-London infection prevention and control guidance.

The service, which is used on average by five patients per day, was moved to Barnet Hospital to enable the Royal Free London to restart planned surgery at Chase Farm Hospital in a safe way.

The change was important to ensure the safety of patients using the OPAU, as well as other patients and staff at Chase Farm Hospital.

Patients who attend the OPAU are required to move across various departments at Chase Farm Hospital and unfortunately - unlike the vast majority of other patients who attend for planned care - it is not possible to screen them for COVID-19 in advance due to the nature of their need to be seen quickly.

OPAU at Barnet Hospital

There has been no change to the way the service is delivered. Our teams continue to assess patients aged 65 and over and accept referrals from GPs in north central London and Hertfordshire.

Referrals are made via telephone and our team will confirm whether the patient is suitable to be assessed by our OPAU team and whether a face-to-face or telephone consultation is needed. Our team will contact the patient directly to arrange their appointment and patient transport will be provided if needed. We have an agreement in place with Harrow Community Transport and DHL.

It is open from 9am to 7pm, Monday to Friday, except bank holidays.

Engagement with stakeholders

Ahead of this temporary service move, we informed affected staff, GPs and commissioners.

NHS England/Improvement¹ outlines that where there is a genuine and pressing need to make a decision about, or a change to, services to protect the health, safety of welfare of patients or staff, then the NHS duty to involve the public may be met by very limited public involvement.

In these circumstances, we are not required to consult our local overview and scrutiny committee prior to taking the decision.

Next steps

Following recent changes in infection control and prevention guidance, we will be reviewing the current arrangements for the OPAU. This will be carried out jointly by the Royal Free London and North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group. We will keep you updated on the outcome of this review.

Further information

If you would like more information or have any queries, please contact Devinder Degun, senior communications manager: devinder.degun@nhs.net

¹ NHS England and Improvement: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/news/page/3/>