



**Experiences of Camden patients attending  
Chase Farm Hospital for planned surgery**

**Publication: January 2020**

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## Introduction

In autumn 2018, some planned surgery at the Royal Free Hospital in the London Borough of Camden (Royal Free) was re-located to Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield (Chase Farm).

The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust asked Healthwatch Camden to help them better understand how well the new services at Chase Farm are working from the patient perspective so they can make improvements if needed.

Healthwatch Camden interviewed a random selection of 25 Camden patients who had attended Chase Farm for planned surgery between September 2018 and April 2019. (See method section on page 28 for details.)

Planned surgery, sometimes called elective surgery, is surgery that is planned and scheduled in advance because it does not involve a medical emergency. Since autumn 2018, Chase Farm has become the main location for planned surgery for the following services offered by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust: orthopaedics; ear, nose and throat; maxillofacial; general surgery and gynaecology.

## Aims

To capture the experiences of Camden patients who have had surgery at Chase Farm since the new arrangements began (either day surgery or surgery requiring an overnight stay).

To learn whether the new arrangements that locate planned surgery at Chase Farm rather than the Royal Free are working well from the perspective of patients who have been referred into the service by Camden-based GP practices.

## Key findings

- Patient experience of going to Chase Farm for planned surgery is dominated by factors largely unrelated to quality of care or clinical outcomes.
- Patients do not experience a choice between going to Chase Farm or the Royal Free for planned surgery. (Figure 1)
- Many patients are being asked to attend Chase Farm for additional appointments for routine tests prior to surgery. (Figure 2)
- The distance from Camden and long, complex and expensive journeys are a major factor in negative patient experience of Chase Farm.
- The majority of patients travel to Chase Farm by taxi or private car on the day of their surgery. The cost of taxis is a major concern. (Figures 5 and 6)
- The majority of patients have good things to say about the staff at Chase Farm.
- Almost half of all interviewees reported a less than positive overall experience of going to Chase Farm for planned surgery. (Figure 10)
- Day patients report the waiting experience, facilities and arrangements as poor.
- Patients staying overnight are mostly very positive about the en-suite bedrooms and new facilities.
- Patients who are admitted to stay overnight and patients who are younger are more likely to report a positive experience of going to Chase Farm. (Figure 11)

## Findings

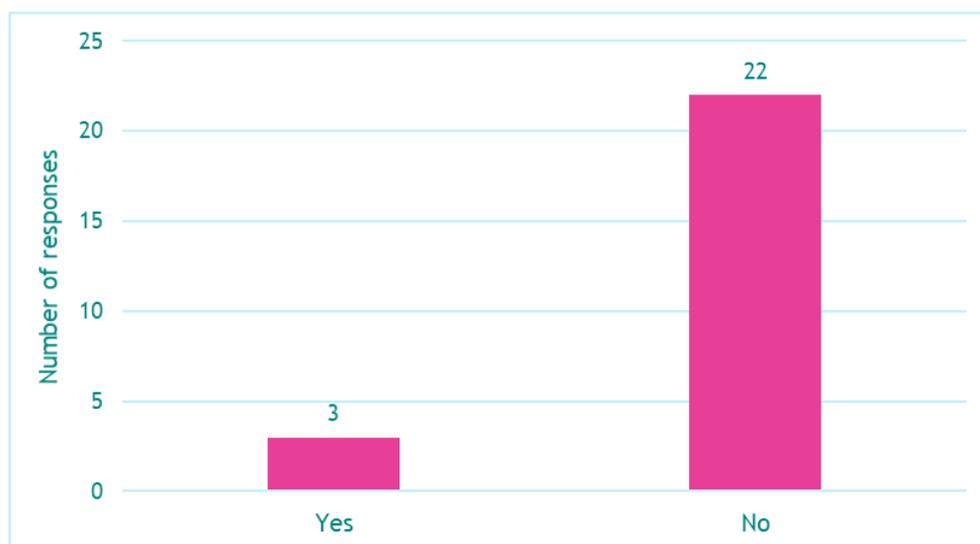
### a. Patient choice

Once patients were offered surgery by the Royal Free, only a very small number (3 out of 25) reported being offered a choice of hospital location for their surgery. Some reported being told that going to Chase Farm would mean a shorter waiting period for their surgery but this was not presented as an explicit choice. This conflicted with information that had been shared with the public which assured Camden patients that they would continue to be offered a choice between having planned surgery at the Royal Free or Chase Farm.

*“The consultant said I could get an earlier appointment by going to Chase Farm.”*

*“I asked can I have it at the Royal Free and they said well no it’s all at the new place now.”*

**Figure 1.** Were you given a choice between Chase Farm and the Royal Free (or any other hospital) for your planned surgery?



We also asked patients if they had any discussion with their consultant or other health professional to help them make a decision about which hospital to attend. Six out of 25 interviewees said they did have a discussion but only one reported that this discussion included the offer of a choice of hospital.

*“I was told - almost threatened - that if I didn’t go to Chase Farm I couldn’t have the operation at all.”*

*“There was no discussion - at least I had no sense that I had a say in the decision.”*

*“I did have a discussion .... They said they could give me the option of the Royal Free for surgery but that I’d have to wait a lot longer.”*

*“I just assumed wherever I was going would be nearby - the implications were not clear. I didn’t know where Chase Farm was!”*

We explored whether patients were more likely to have been offered a choice in autumn 2018 (when arrangements for planned surgery first changed) with choice being withdrawn as the new arrangements became established through early 2019. However, there was no evidence to suggest this was the case. Out of the three patients who reported being offered a choice, all had surgery since January 2019.

The interviews suggested variation in the way in which health professionals at the Royal Free are communicating with their patients around the issue of choice. Confusion or lack of transparency about choice has contributed to some patients feeling dissatisfied.

*“The consultant said the reason I should go to Chase Farm for surgery was that I didn’t have any other health issues to make it complicated.”*

*“They explained that you go to Chase Farm if you are younger and lower risk.”*

*“I have since learned that in special circumstances (my husband has dementia) we might have been able to go to the Royal Free instead.”*

One interviewee recalled seeing a “promotional sign” at the Royal Free offering a choice to go to Chase Farm which by March 2019 had changed to a new sign no longer suggesting that a choice was involved.

Our researchers did not ask specific questions about choice at the original point of referral from GP to hospital because our project focused on the experience once under a hospital consultant. However, we learned that a few GPs had alerted patients to the likelihood that, should they choose the Royal Free, their surgery would be at Chase Farm. Other GPs had not informed patients about the alternative location for planned surgery. This meant that patients had chosen to be referred to the Royal Free without understanding that surgery would not take place at the Hampstead site in Camden.

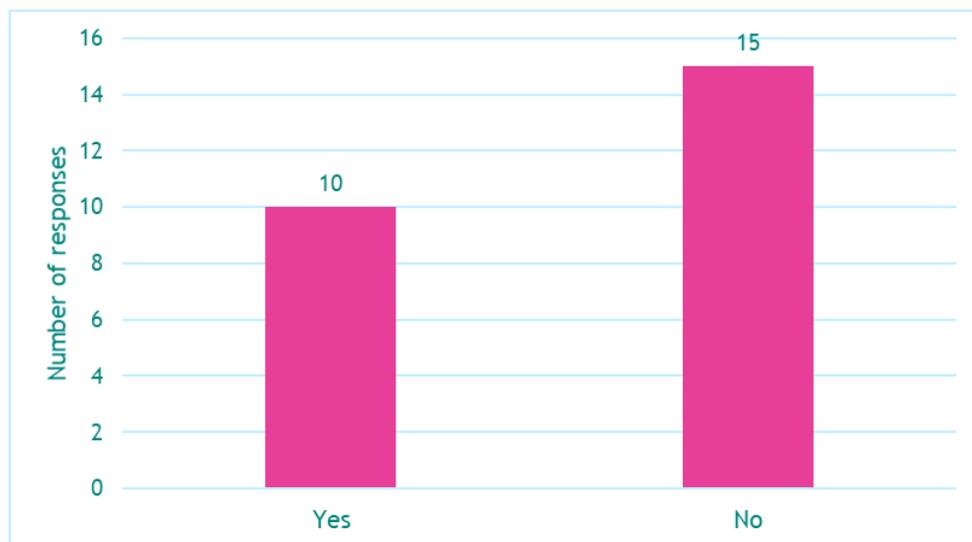
## b. Locations for pre-op and post-op appointments

Among the 25 patients interviewed, the majority (15) were asked to attend Chase Farm for at least one additional visit on a day prior to their arrival for planned surgery. The pre-surgery visits were for a range of things including blood tests and pre-op assessments. For a minority (10) all pre-op appointments took place at the Royal Free.

*“I had to go to Chase Farm twice before the surgery - once for blood tests and once for the pre-op appointment.”*

*“I had three visits to Chase Farm before going for surgery - two of the visits were for blood tests.”*

**Figure 2.** Did all your appointments and tests prior to surgery take place at the Royal Free?



Four patients had to go to Barnet Hospital for tests and were unclear why these were not done at either the Royal Free or Chase Farm.

*“I wanted to get the pre-op tests done at the Royal Free but they said that Barnet Hospital was linked to Chase Farm because the Royal Free was too far away from Chase Farm so I had to go to Barnet for my blood and urine tests.”*

No one was asked to return to Chase Farm for a follow up appointment. Thirteen patients were not given any follow up appointment at a hospital but for the 12 who did have a hospital follow up these all took place at the Royal Free.

### c. Patient concerns about going to Chase Farm

We asked patients whether they had any concerns about going to Chase Farm. Two among the 25 interviewed reported no concerns with 20 reporting more than one thing they were worried about. Issues related to the distance, location and travel challenges (including cost of travel) were by far the most common worries. Only two expressed any concerns about the quality of care they might receive.

*“I was worried about having to pay for taxis.”*

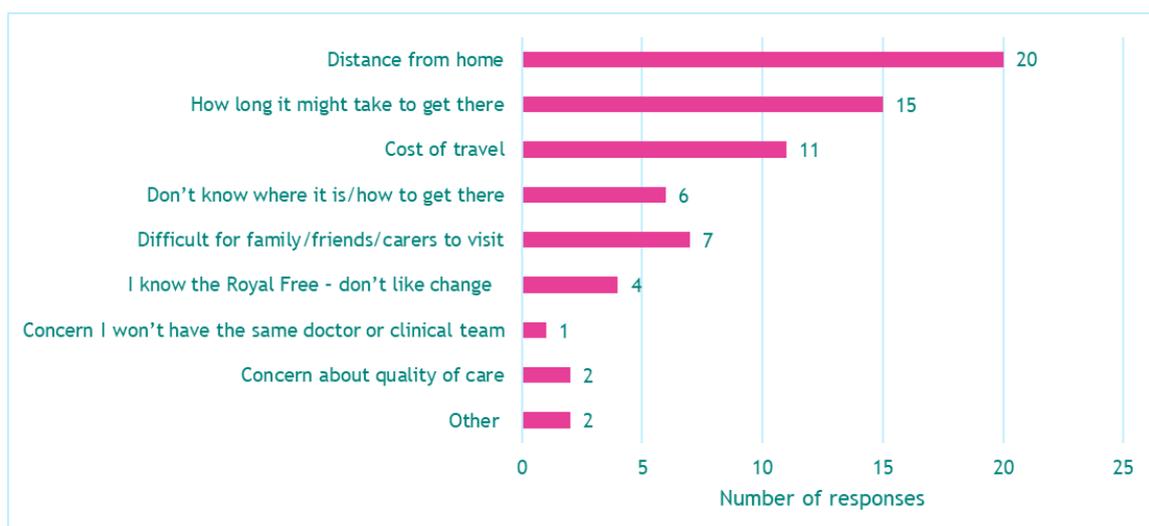
*“I didn’t have any worries on the medical front.”*

*“I suffer from panic attacks so the journey was a very scary prospect. I felt comfortable at Pond Street.”*

*“I was worried it would be really hard to get there but in fact it was fine.”*

*“I was worried about being stuck in the middle of nowhere and it being difficult for friends and family to visit.”*

**Figure 3. Patient worries about going to Chase Farm**



#### d. Positive hopes and expectations

When asked to share any positive hopes and expectations about their visit to Chase Farm, 8 patients reported nothing that they expected to be good but 17 mentioned at least one positive expectation. The new facilities and the nice environment and space were by far the most frequently mentioned.

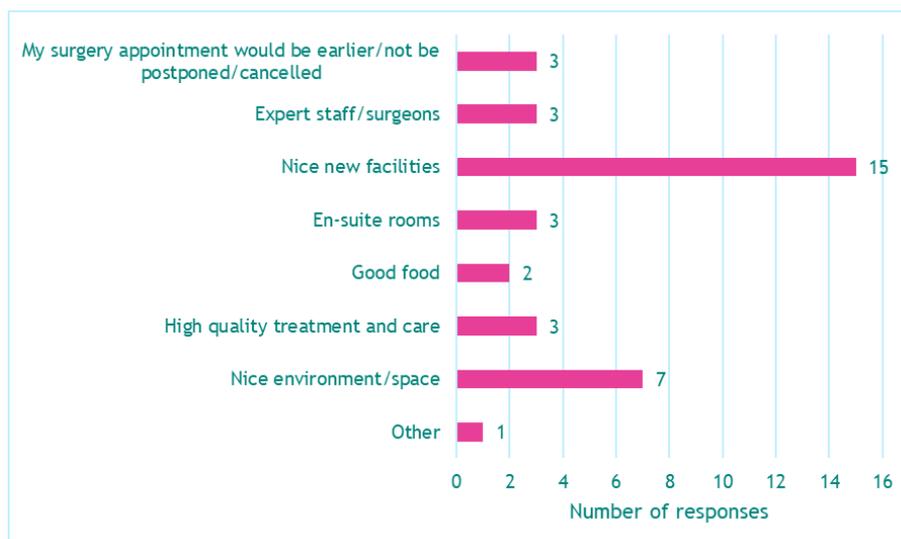
*“I was told it was all new so I was quite looking forward to seeing it.”*

*“The new facilities were not a draw for me. There is something reassuring about the familiar.”*

*“I thought there would be a nice clean and friendly environment and a short waiting time.”*

*“I thought it would be modern with good technology.”*

**Figure 4.** What did you think would be good about Chase Farm?



Only six out of a total 37 positive mentions by the 25 patients made reference to matters related to clinical outcomes and quality of care (three mentions for expectations of high-quality treatment and care and three mentions for expectations of expert staff and surgeons). This seems to demonstrate that factors concerning health outcomes do not feature high in the minds of patients preparing to attend hospital for planned surgery. Practical considerations are far more likely to be front of mind.

## e. Travel to Chase Farm and back

Concerns about travel to Chase Farm emerged as the single most significant factor driving negative reporting of patient experience. We asked interviewees several questions about their travel arrangements. We focused specifically on travel to hospital for the planned surgery but we noted that more than half of those we interviewed had also been required to travel to Chase Farm for pre-op appointments on at least one occasion prior to the day of their planned surgery.

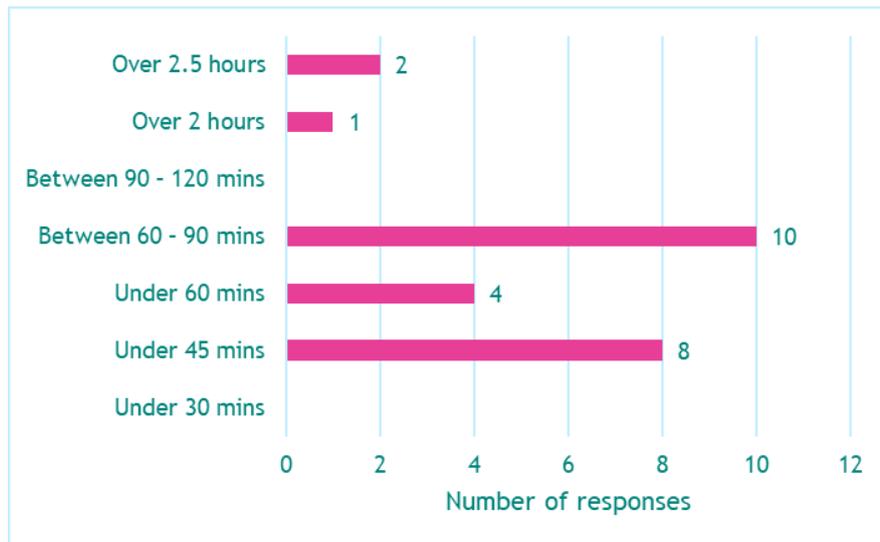
**Figure 5. Methods of transport**



When they attended Chase Farm for surgery, the majority of patients travelled both there and back by car, either in a taxi or a private car. We noted that a higher number used public transport to get to hospital for planned surgery than to get home when discharged and to get there and back from pre-op appointments.

Journey times by car were under one hour for those patients called to arrive by 7am when traffic is generally light. Car journeys home or for later arrivals were up to and often over one hour. Patients using public transport reported journey times up to two hours or more. Out of our total 25 interviewees, over half (52%) took more than 60 minutes to get from home to the hospital.

**Figure 6.** How long did it take you to get to Chase Farm?



*“My husband couldn’t come to visit me because it was too far to travel.”*

*“It took me 4 hours by public transport on 4 different buses.”*

*“My visitors came by public transport then took a taxi from the nearest tube.”*

*“We borrowed a car. The car park was easy to find and it was all set up extremely well.”*

*“The journey was difficult because there are no signs on the approach so the hospital is hard to find.”*

*“The journey was straightforward as I was being driven and it was early morning so little traffic.”*

*“It wasn’t hard to find. I used Google maps. There was ample signposting once I got to the nearest station.”*

Many interviewees who had travelled by taxi expressed concerns about the cost and often expressed concern on behalf of others who might be less able to meet this cost than they were themselves. We heard that most people travelling by taxi paid between £25 and £30 for a one-way journey. For day patients this meant a travel cost of around £60 in one day.

*“If you were unemployed the cost of a taxi is too high.”*

*“How am I supposed to cope with this going back and forth? We can afford the £50 taxi but others can’t.”*

As part of our research, three Healthwatch Camden team members undertook the journey to Chase Farm using different public transport options and starting from a central location in Camden. All three took over 90 minutes with the longest journey taking two hours and 40 minutes. The stories of these three journeys are in Annex 4.

#### **f. Facilities at Chase Farm**

Once patients had arrived at Chase Farm there was a generally good report of the facilities there. However, the majority of patients were day patients so did not benefit from the en-suite rooms and new facilities. Out of our total of 25 interviewees, 16 were day patients and only 9 stayed in hospital overnight.

Patients admitted to the wards overnight had some very positive things to say:

*“I stayed in a single en-suite room and it was lovely. It felt like a hotel.”*

*“I had a shower and TV. I thought it was fantastic!”*

*“101 percent - excellent!”*

*“I couldn’t have faulted the room. It was lovely and clean.”*

*“The room was so nice I wish I could have it forever.”*

*“The room was fantastic! It was like being a princess with everything sparkling clean.”*

However, not everyone placed such high value on the new facilities:

*“The facilities were not relevant to me. I didn’t care and was in no fit state to notice.”*

*“I found it too clinical - not like the Royal Free where you have the hustle and bustle and it feels warm and comfortable and safe.”*

We heard good things about the food:

*“The food was very good.”*

*“It was nice to have a menu to choose from and there were meat, fish and vegetarian options.”*

*“The Costa Coffee was nice.”*

*“There was wifi in the café so my wife could work while waiting for me.”*

*“The café was good but I was surprised there wasn’t a restaurant for a hot meal.”*

Feedback from day patients was generally more negative. The experience of waiting was a dominant factor. We heard a lot of feedback about the way in which the waiting process was managed.

*“I was asked to arrive at 6am. I didn’t have the surgery until about 2pm.”*

*“The waiting room was very full and people told me they had been waiting for 5 hours or more. I waited for 3 hours but then I gave up and decided to leave.”*

*“People in the waiting room were like zombies. Some had been waiting since 7am.”*

*“The waiting area was cramped and there was no privacy.”*

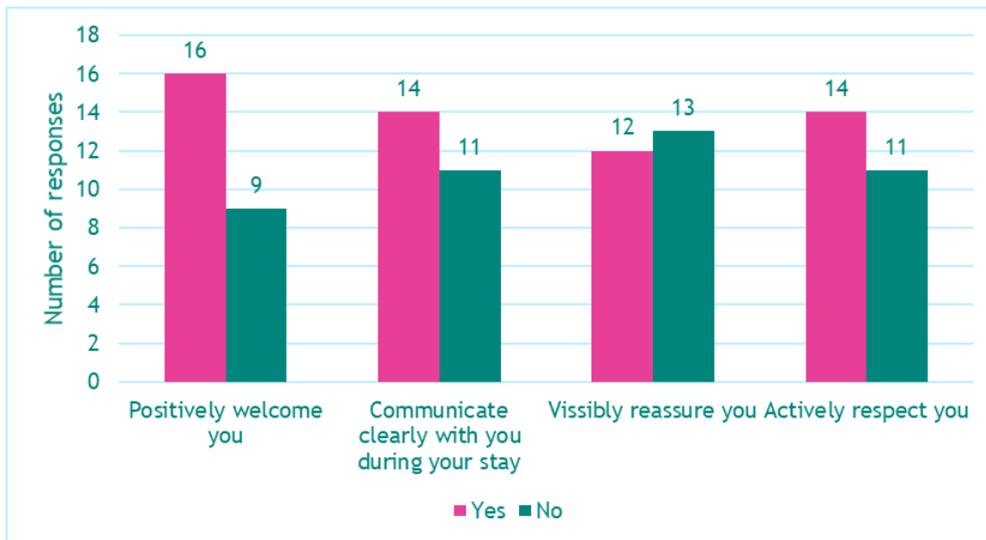
*“I waited from 9am to 7pm in the evening to have the operation.”*

*“If people are going to be kept waiting all day they need to be in a place where they can have a lie down.”*

#### **g. Staff at Chase Farm**

Welcoming and caring staff can make a big difference to patient experiences in hospital. We asked four questions about staff at Chase Farm. Overall there were more positive than negative responses to questions about staff. However, the number of negative responses across the four questions was enough to be significant.

**Figure 7. Tell us about the staff. Did they.....?**



*“The nurses were lovely.”*

*“The staff were very good at explaining everything.”*

*“They didn’t explain anything and they were very rushed.”*

*“I felt safe and well looked after and they even carried my luggage.”*

*“They didn’t really tell you much. It was very difficult to find anyone in charge. People got rather fed up.”*

*“The admin people were rude.”*

*“They were very welcoming but after that there was a lack of communication. When you are anxious good communication is key.”*

*“When I did speak to the staff they were very polite and friendly but the proactive bit was missing - they didn’t come to me.”*

*“I wrote a letter to the CEO of Chase Farm to say how wonderfully they worked as a team.”*

*“I really appreciate the staff they are working very hard and they are very polite and respectful.”*

## h. Communication and information

Communication emerged as a significant concern among many of the patients we interviewed. Although 13 out of 25 said they were kept “fully informed every step of the way”, the remainder (12 out of 25) felt they were not kept sufficiently informed during their time at Chase Farm.

*“They kept me informed. The pre-op talk was very important and very good. If you missed that you wouldn’t know what was going on.”*

*“There was a bit of confusion about communication. One nurse said I didn’t have to stay overnight when I’d been told I did.”*

*“The discharge experience needs to be improved. I’d been told I’d be discharged but I was left waiting and nothing happened. The nurse looking after me didn’t seem to know what was happening either. I never fully discovered whether I was meant to go or not.”*

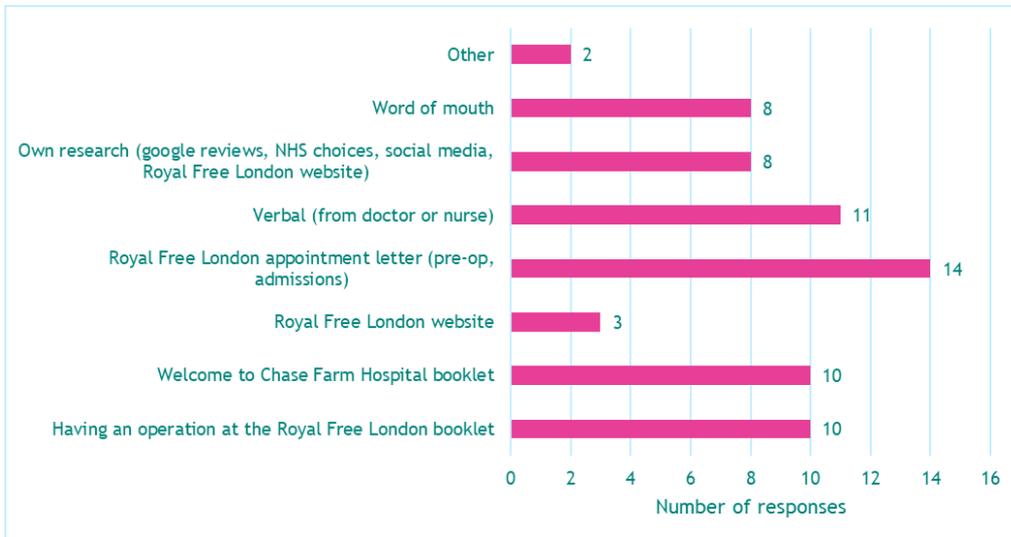
*“We were told to arrive at 7am but I looked at the website and it said it didn’t open until 8am so I didn’t know how we’d get in so I had to call up to check. At the Royal Free we are familiar with the set up so we don’t have these worries there.”*

*“UCLH are much better on communication and seem to have a level of empathy and understanding. They talk to you and are friendly and clear about what’s going on. They give you choices and time. You don’t feel like someone on an assembly line.”*

Communication between Royal Free and Chase Farm was good according to the majority of patients. Only a few reported that there had been a breakdown in communication between the two sites.

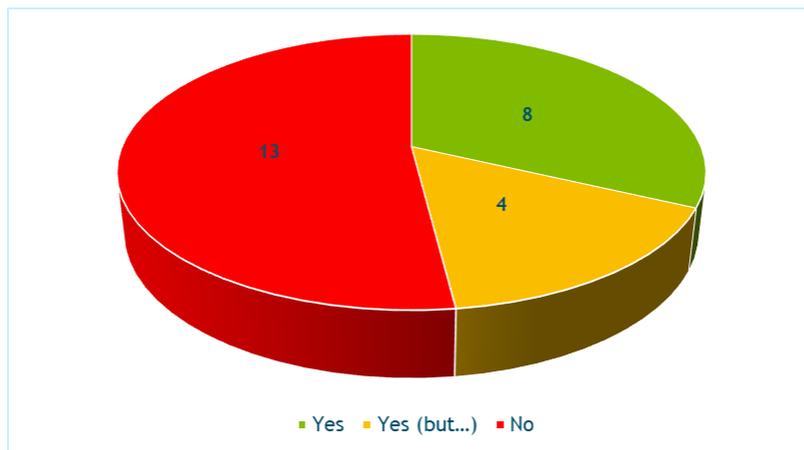
We also asked the patients about the information they had accessed before attending Chase Farm. The responses were mixed but the majority recalled receiving at least one item of information material provided by the Royal Free about having an operation at Chase Farm. We heard a small number of complaints about a lack of information about Chase Farm, where it was and how to get there.

**Figure 8.** What information did you have about Chase Farm before going?



**i. Would you recommend Chase Farm?**

**Figure 9.** Would you recommend choosing Chase Farm for surgery to other Camden-based patients?



Over half of those interviewed (13) said they would not recommend going to Chase Farm to other Camden patients. Eight said they would recommend it. Four said they would recommend it but only for those who were able to afford a taxi or had a friend or relative to drive them.

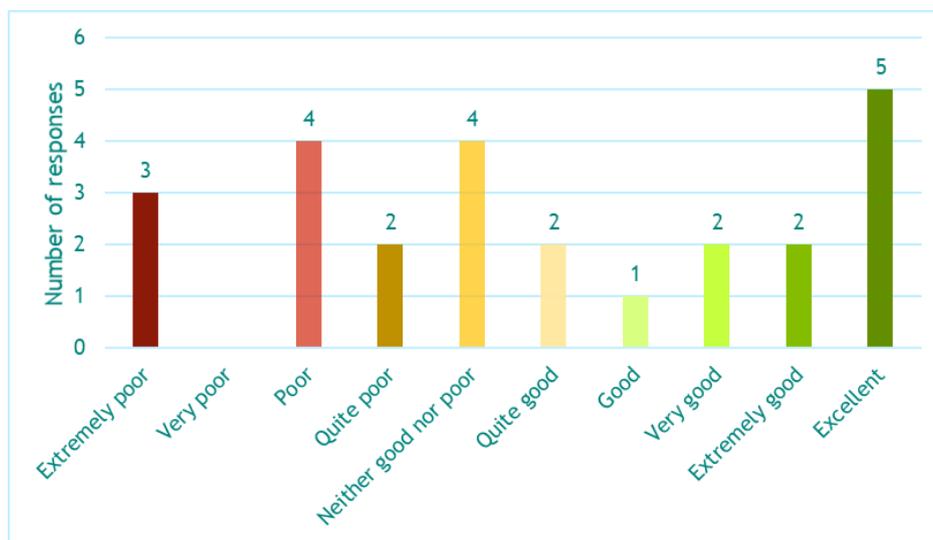
*“Yes I’d recommend it. It’s brand new! The only problem is that it’s a bit of a journey.”*

*“I wouldn’t recommend it because it’s too far to go.”*

### j. Overall experience of Chase Farm

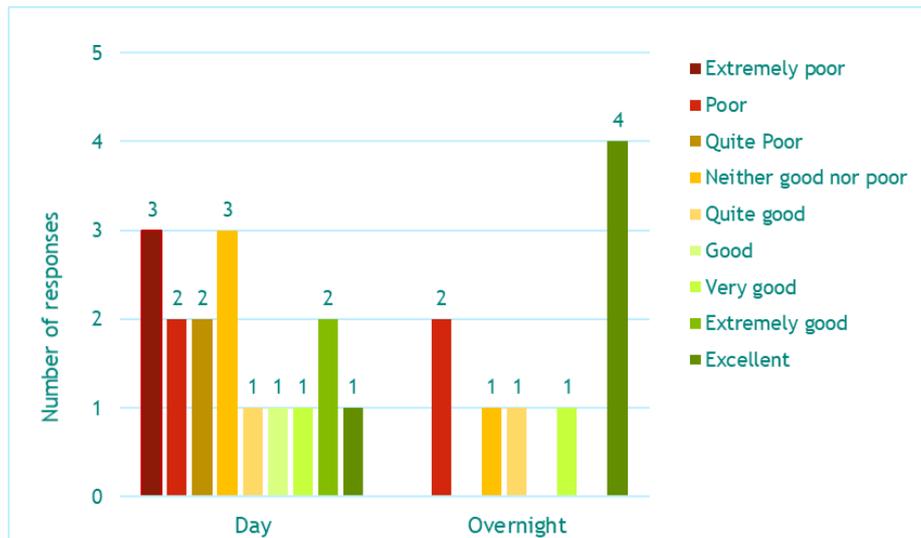
When asked to rate their overall experience of going to Chase Farm for planned surgery, responses were split fairly evenly between a positive or negative rating.

**Figure 10.** How would you rate your overall experience of going to Chase Farm?



A deeper examination of the overall experience rating responses revealed a clear link between overnight stays and a better overall experience (see Figure 11 below). Among the nine patients who were admitted for at least one night, none rated their experience as very poor and four rated their experience excellent. In comparison, among day patients only one rated their experience as excellent and three gave a rating of very poor.

**Figure 11. Patient experience by length of stay**



As discussed earlier (see facilities at Chase Farm on page 12) our conversations with these patients revealed that the new facilities and en-suite rooms on the wards were highly valued by those patients who stayed overnight and had a positive impact on their overall experience, somewhat outweighing their negative reports of the long journey to Chase Farm. For day patients on the other hand, the long journey had to be undertaken twice in one day and they did not enjoy the benefits of admission to one of the new hospital rooms. The cost of taking a taxi there and back also felt more excessive for those who had to undertake both journeys in one day.

There was a slight but less clear correlation between older patients and poor experience. The majority of older patients aged between 70-90 rated their overall experience no better than “quite good” with a single rating of excellent out of the total of 10 interviewees in this age group. In contrast, among the younger cohort of patients aged 20-50 years only one rated their overall experience less than “neither good nor poor” with five of these nine rating it good or above.

These responses suggest that the challenges of the journey to Chase Farm and the demands of attending a hospital with which they are not familiar weighed more heavily on older patients.

The travel distance, time, cost and inconvenience of getting to Chase Farm were very significant factors in their overall experience for a large majority of patients. In the specific case of Chase Farm, the definition of patient experience clearly extends beyond the walls of the facility, the quality of the care or the

communication skills and responsiveness of staff. Patient experience also encompasses the journey there and back.

Some of the patients we interviewed had gone through a bad experience that was caused by or related to clinical complications and outcomes. As neither the clinical performance of the hospital nor clinical outcomes for patients were the subject of our research we are not reporting those cases here.

*“My experience was minus zero. Chase Farm was all over the place.” (day patient)*

*“It was the best experience I have had in hospital.” (patient staying for two nights)*

*“It took a long time to get to Chase Farm but it was grand.”*

*“I would say I had a good experience but I’d advise other patients to make sure you’ve got someone to drive you there and back.”*

## k. Patient suggestions for improvements

We invited patients to make suggestions to improve experience for other patients in future.

Patients' suggestions	
Travel arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A transport hub and links</li> <li>▪ Shuttle bus (between Royal Free and Chase Farm throughout the day)</li> <li>▪ Bus stop on the Chase Farm site</li> <li>▪ Pick up and drop off parking spaces; free of charge</li> <li>▪ Taxi office/telephone line inside the hospital (clearly signposted)</li> <li>▪ Improved signage: by road and on foot from nearby stations and bus stops</li> <li>▪ 'How to get there?' leaflet (with dotted line from stations and bus stops)</li> </ul>
Day patient waiting arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve waiting arrangements for day patients</li> <li>▪ Reduce length of waits</li> <li>▪ Operate a ticket system (so patients and accompaniers can manage their waits)</li> <li>▪ Refreshment trolley in the waiting areas</li> <li>▪ Align café hours with patient arrival and departure hours</li> </ul>
Communication with patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Better communication skills</li> <li>▪ A more human touch (for a friendlier, safer environment)</li> <li>▪ Regular updates for patients in waiting room</li> </ul>
Unnecessary visits to Chase Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All pre-op tests to be done at Royal Free and sent electronically to Chase Farm</li> </ul>
Choice for vulnerable patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offer vulnerable patients, particular those with dementia the option of surgery at Royal Free</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

Evidence indicates that separating elective and emergency care improves quality of care by reducing unwarranted variation and improving clinical outcomes. However, the patient views gathered for this report confirm that patient experience and patient choice are usually influenced more strongly by practical considerations (familiarity, convenience and comfort) than by evidence on clinical outcomes. The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust must recognise that efforts to improve the reputation of Chase Farm among Camden patients must focus on mitigating the problems associated with travel and on improving the amenities and reducing the on-site waiting time for day patients.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should explore and invest in a range of options to improve travel from Camden:

- a. Work with Transport for London and Enfield Council to improve signage to Chase Farm from nearby bus stops and stations
- b. Work with Transport for London to establish a bus stop within Chase Farm grounds at the hospital main entrance
- c. Initiate discussions with Transport for London route planners to establish a new bus route from central Camden direct to Chase Farm
- d. Organise 24 hour taxi office inside hospital reception area or Freephone line to a local taxi office
- e. Explore ways to facilitate car-share or taxi-share arrangements among patients.

*Why? The journey to and from hospital is a major factor driving negative patient experience of Chase Farm. To improve this, the Trust will have to expand its conception of patient experience to encompass the experience from home to hospital door.*

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust must reduce on-site waiting time for day patients by reviewing the process by which patients are listed for surgery and by moving the early morning call from 7am to 8am.

*Why? A long wait after arrival at Chase Farm further exacerbates the stress that can be caused by a long and expensive journey and - for patients called to arrive at 7am - by a very early start.*

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust must improve waiting arrangements for day patients at Chase Farm including:

- a. Improve the waiting area with more spacious and comfortable seating, more privacy, rest areas, tables and opportunities for lying down
- b. Ensure refreshments are available for family, friends or carers accompanying patients during hours when the café and shop are closed.

*Why? The offer to day patients attending Chase Farm is not sufficiently attractive to mitigate the negative experience of a long and expensive return journey in one day.*

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should eliminate all unnecessary extra visits to Chase Farm for Camden patients. With the exception of the pre-op assessment (for which the benefits of being on site are clear to patients), any tests should be done at the Royal Free in Camden.

*Why? Every journey to Chase Farm is expensive and inconvenient for Camden patients and contributes to an overall poor experience.*

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should offer vulnerable Camden patients, particularly those with dementia, the option of planned surgery at the Royal Free instead of Chase Farm.

*Why? The challenging journey to Chase Farm and the experience of an unknown environment far from home can be highly stressful and disorienting for people with dementia.*

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should explore the feasibility of offering older or vulnerable people, or those without access to private transport, the choice of an overnight stay at Chase Farm as a routine alternative to day surgery.

*Why? An overnight stay prior to surgery can ease stress by avoiding a two way journey on one day and allow patients to benefit from the good facilities. The cost involved for the Trust may be offset by the improved patient experience and wellbeing.*

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** Camden based GPs must always explain to patients that any planned surgery for patients referred to the Royal Free will take place at Chase Farm. Patients need this information to help them make the right choice of hospital at the GP referral stage.

*Why? Patients are entitled to a choice of hospital when referred by their GP to a specialist. Patients need full information about the implications of their choice should the hospital outpatient appointment lead to planned surgery at a later date.*

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** Doctors based at the Royal Free should adopt a clear and consistent approach for explaining to patients that planned surgery will take place at Chase Farm and why.

*Why? Explanations being given to patients are inconsistent and lead to the circulation of misinformation which is contributing to more widespread confusion across the Camden community.*

### Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust response

At the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, we are committed to ensuring that our patients receive the very best care, treatment and experience when they visit our hospitals.

Following the opening of the new Chase Farm Hospital (CFH) in July 2018, we made a decision that CFH would be the main location for planned surgery to allow Barnet Hospital to focus on medical and surgical emergencies and Royal Free Hospital (RFH) to focus on specialist surgery and emergency care.

Some of our patients from Camden were unhappy about this change and we asked Healthwatch Camden to engage with patients to help us better understand what matters to them when they visit CFH.

Since receiving this report and the recommendations, we have been working hard to improve patient experience. Our friends and family test results from October 2019 to January 2020 show that over 90 percent of patients who had day surgery or surgery which required an overnight stay would recommend our surgical services at CFH.

We have responded to each of Healthwatch Camden's recommendations below.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Healthwatch Camden for supporting us with this work.

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**Recommendation 1: The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should explore and invest in a range of options to improve travel from Camden:**

- a. Work with Transport for London and Enfield Council to improve signage to Chase Farm from nearby bus stops and stations
- b. Work with Transport for London to establish a bus stop within Chase Farm grounds at the hospital main entrance
- c. Initiate discussions with Transport for London route planners to establish a new bus route from central Camden direct to Chase Farm

- d. **Organise 24-hour taxi office inside hospital reception area or Freephone line to a local taxi office**
- e. **Explore ways to facilitate car-share or taxi-share arrangements among patients.**

We have been working hard to improve access to CFH to make sure everyone who needs to, can reach the hospital easily.

Following discussions with Transport for London (TFL), a new bus stop outside the front entrance of CFH has opened. Bus routes W8 and W9 now start and finish at the hospital and bus stops include Gordon Hill rail station, Edmonton Green rail and Overground station, Grange Park rail station and Southgate tube station. We are also talking to TFL and Enfield Council about improving signage to CFH from nearby bus stops and stations.

There is a free to use telephone in the main foyer of CFH which patients can use to book a taxi. We also have a concierge service in the foyer who can book taxis for patients.

We will share the recommendation about establishing a new bus route from Camden to our hospital with TFL. Car-share and taxi-share arrangements will also be explored.

**Recommendation 2: The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust must reduce on-site waiting time for day patients by reviewing the process by which patients are listed for surgery and by moving the early morning call from 7am to 8am.**

To help reduce the time patients are waiting to have their surgery, our patient arrival times for surgery have been staggered. At CFH we now offer up to four admission times between 7am and 5pm.

We also carry out further checks ahead of the day to help reduce waiting times for surgery in a 'Good to Go' process which nominates the first patient for each theatre list and the subsequent order of the rest of the list.

We have been working hard to improve the experience for our patients but at times, due to a clinical need, we may have to make changes to the order of our theatre lists and the time between each operation taking place on the day.

**Recommendation 3: The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust must improve waiting arrangements for day patients at Chase Farm including:**

- a. **Improve the waiting area with more spacious and comfortable seating, more privacy, rest areas, tables and opportunities for lying down**

- b. Ensure refreshments are available for family, friends or carers accompanying patients during hours when the café and shop are closed.**

The new CFH was co-designed with our patients and staff to ensure that our new facilities met their needs.

We are committed to ensuring that our patients have the best experience possible when visiting CFH. We review patient feedback regularly and are always looking at how we can improve to make sure our patients receive high quality care and treatment. We have recently appointed a new clinical manager to oversee our day surgery and recovery areas and support improvements in patient experience.

We are exploring how we can provide more privacy to our patients who have surgery at CFH. In particular, we are looking at the time(s) that our patients are changed into their hospital gowns for surgery and whether this can happen closer to their surgery time. This will mean they do not have to wait in the waiting areas with other patients and visitors in their gowns.

Our theatres run from 7am until 8pm. The café and shop in the hospital are open between 7am and 7pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 3pm, at weekends. If the café and shop are both closed, those accompanying patients can use the vending machines in our out-patient areas to get refreshments.

**Recommendation 4: The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should eliminate all unnecessary extra visits to Chase Farm for Camden patients. With the exception of the pre-op assessment (for which the benefits of being on site are clear to patients), any tests should be done at the Royal Free in Camden.**

Patients who choose to have their surgery at CFH can have their out-patient appointments and their pre-operative assessment at their local hospital.

The only pre-operative visit we recommend patients travel to CFH for is the Joint School. This is an excellent schooling opportunity for patients waiting for hip or knee replacement surgery as this allows patients the opportunity to get familiar with CFH ahead of surgery.

This is also an opportunity for patients to meet key members of their post-operative care team. Delivered by our orthopaedic advanced practitioners and therapy team, patients will learn about the operation itself including the risks, benefits and post-operative recovery plans.

We are currently looking to create a recording of the schools so that patients can access this 'virtually' without having to attend hospital.

**Recommendation 5: The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should offer vulnerable Camden patients, particularly those with dementia, the option of planned surgery at the Royal Free instead of Chase Farm.**

We will be looking into offering patients, particularly those with dementia, the option of planned surgery at the RFH instead of CFH and exploring whether we would be able to do this.

**Recommendation 6: The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust should explore the feasibility of offering older or vulnerable people, or those without access to private transport, the choice of an overnight stay at Chase Farm as a routine alternative to day surgery.**

If patients are unable to travel to CFH, they can contact our patient transport service to determine if they are eligible for patient transport. Access to patient transport is based on medical need and the eligibility criteria are in line with the Department of Health and Social Care's guidelines.

Patients who are vulnerable are already considered for an overnight stay but this is on an individual basis.

Patients can call 0333 240 4909 to have a telephone assessment and visit our website for more information: <https://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/non-emergency-patient-transport/>

**Recommendation 7: Camden based GPs must always explain to patients that any planned surgery for patients referred to the Royal Free will take place at Chase Farm. Patients need this information to help them make the right choice of hospital at the GP referral stage.**

We would be happy to work with Camden Clinical Commissioning Group, GPs and patients to determine the best way to explain to patients that if they are referred to the RFH and need an operation, they will have this at CFH.

**Recommendation 8: Doctors based at the Royal Free should adopt a clear and consistent approach for explaining to patients that planned surgery will take place at Chase Farm and why.**

We will update our patient information leaflet, 'A guide to where you will have your operation'. This will be shared with our doctors to give to patients and be made available in the relevant out-patient areas at the RFH.

## Method

The research used one-to-one in depth interviews. Interviews were structured using a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions. Free comment around all the questions was encouraged and recorded. A maximum of 60 minutes was allocated per interview. Actual interview times ranged from 40 minutes to 80 minutes per interview. Responses were recorded using hand-written notes with effort made to capture direct quotations. Interviews were then coded to ensure anonymity. The responses were reviewed and the commonly occurring responses and themes were identified to create a reporting framework. Each interview was then analysed using the reporting framework.

Interviewees were identified by Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust through their patient records. Patients were contacted directly by Royal Free staff and invited to volunteer for interview. Two interviewees volunteered directly to Healthwatch Camden. Healthwatch Camden arranged interview times and locations directly with the patients. Interviews were conducted either in patient homes, public venues or by telephone.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 25 patients. The age of patients ranged between 20 and 82 with an average age of 60. The group was diverse and included patients from across a wide range of ethnicities including from black and minority ethnic groups. Four of the 25 were disabled. 15 were women. The 25 patients had attended Chase Farm for a wide range of surgical procedures. Full details of the characteristics of the sample are reported in Annex 3.

Interviews were conducted by a team of three experienced researchers. Care was taken to ensure that no one was pressured to take part in an interview if they did not wish to do so. Those who volunteered for interview were given details of the scope and reason for the interview. Guidelines for the protection of the wellbeing of patients were observed at all times.

Some of the direct quotations included in the report have been edited for length and fluency.

See Annex 2 for the questions used to structure our interviews.

## About Healthwatch Camden

Healthwatch Camden is an independent organisation with a remit to make sure that the views of local service users in Camden are heard, responded to, taken seriously and help to bring about service improvements.

Our duties (which are set out under the Health and Social Care Act 2012) are to support and promote people's involvement in the planning, running

and monitoring of services; to gather views and experience and to make reports and recommendations for improvement based on those views; to offer information and advice on access to services and choices people can make in services; and to enable local people to monitor the quality of local services.

Our remit extends across all publicly funded health and social care in the borough. It includes statutory powers to enter and view any publicly funded health and social care service and to call for a formal response from the relevant bodies to any of the recommendations we make. Healthwatch Camden has a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board and contributes to strategic thinking about reducing health inequalities across the borough.

## Annex 1: Travel to Chase Farm - three stories

On Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June, three team members from Healthwatch Camden set off to experience the journey to Chase Farm ourselves. We also researched a range of journey options that were accessible for wheelchair users and for people only able to manage a walk under 10 minutes. All these options took times of over 90 minutes.

**Shelly's journey** took a total of about 1 hour and 15 minutes

Cost: £5.30 peak/3.50 off peak single

- Kentish Town Northern line to Euston
- Victoria line from Euston to Finsbury Park
- (Walk about 5 -10 mins) to Finsbury Park mainline station
- Take Great Northern Line to Gordon Hill
- Walk about 15mins to Chase Farm (There is no sign posting towards the hospital from the station so Shelly had to ask people to find out where it was. At Gordon Hill there are steps up from the platform and there is no lift.)

**Anna's Journey** took a total of 1 hour and 40 minutes

Cost: £6.20 peak/£4.20 off peak single and then £2 bus fare single Potter Bar to Chase Farm

- Walk to Gospel Oak Overground station (10 mins)
- Train to Highbury and Islington
- Change to Great Northern Line (There is a lift from the Overground platform and then an escalator but then there are steps only down to the Great Northern platform.)
- Train to Potters Bar
- At Potters Bar, Anna was stopped on exit and asked to pay a £20 fine as her ticket did not cover the journey to Potters Bar which falls one stop outside the zone. To avoid the fine she returned to within the zone and bought a new ticket. (The London Freedom card limit is Hadley Wood so cardholders would need to go to a ticket office at the start of the journey to buy a ticket from Hadley Wood to Potters Bar and return. If there is no open ticket office they would have to alight at Hadley Wood, buy a ticket there and get the next train. There are 4 trains an hour but the

break would probably add 30 minutes to the journey. Freedom cards will however operate on the 313 bus].

- Train back to Hadley Wood (exit station and buy ticket to Potters Bar)
- Train back to Potters Bar
- 313 bus to Chase Farm

**Liz's Journey** took a total of 2 hours and 40 minutes.

Cost: £4.70 peak/ £3.70 off peak tube fare and then £1.50 bus fare single Oakwood Station to Chase Farm Hospital.

- Walk to Kentish Town station
- Northern Line tube to Kings Cross
- Piccadilly Line tube to Oakwood (step-free exit)
- Bus 298 from Oakwood to Southgate and then change
- Bus 313 from Southgate to Chase Farm – misdirected regarding the best stop to get off.

[Except where stated there are either lift or escalator connections. Fares are taken from TfL website and assume journey to CF at peak time with return off peak. It is assumed that depending on clinic times one journey leg will be in a peak period. It is also assumed that many patients will have TfL Freedom cards. These cards are valid for Liz's and Shelly's journey because both Gordon Hill and Oakwood stations are within the Freedom Card zone. On Anna's journey both Freedom and Oyster cards are valid only to Hadley Wood, one stop before Potters Bar].

## Annex 2: Interview questions

Interviews were structured using the following questions:

1. What is the name of your GP practice?
2. For what treatment or procedure did you attend Chase Farm?
3. Can you remember roughly when you attended Chase Farm?  
(circle)
  - Within past month
  - 2 months ago
  - 3 months ago
  - 4 months ago
  - 5 months ago
  - 6 months ago
  - More than 6 months ago
4. Once you were offered surgery by the Royal Free, were you given a choice between Chase Farm and Royal Free (or any other hospital) for the operation?
  - Yes (if so where?)
  - No
5. Was there a discussion with your consultant (or other professional) to help you make a decision about which hospital you would attend?
6. What information did you access about Chase Farm before having your operation there?
  - Having an operation at the Royal Free London booklet
  - Welcome to Chase Farm booklet
  - Royal Free London website
  - Royal Free London appointment letter (pre-op, admissions)
  - Verbal (from doctor or nurse)
  - Own research (Google reviews, NHS choices, social media, Royal Free London website)
  - Word of mouth
  - Other (if so what?)
7. Why did you choose Chase Farm for your surgery?
8. Before you went.....did you have any worries about going to Chase Farm?  
If so, what were you worried about?  
(circle any bullet mentioned and encourage free comment)
  - Distance from home
  - How long it might take to get there

- Cost of travel
- Don't know where it is/how to get there
- Difficult for family/friends/carers to visit
- I know the Royal Free - don't like change
- Concern I won't have the same doctor or clinical team
- Concern about quality of care
- Other (if so what?)

**9. Before you went..... what did you think would be good about Chase Farm?**

- My surgery appointment would not be postponed/cancelled
- Expert staff/surgeons
- Nice new facilities
- En-suite rooms
- Good food
- High quality treatment and care
- Nice environment/space
- Other (if so what?)

**10. How did you get to Chase Farm?**

- Car driven by myself/family/friend/carer
- Taxi
- Public Transport: bus; over ground train; tube; (for combination circle all that apply)
- Shuttle bus
- Patient transport service
- Bike
- Combinations of public and private methods
- Other (if so, how did you get there?)

**11. How did you get home when you were discharged?**

- Car driven by myself/family/friend/carer
- Taxi
- Public Transport: bus; over ground train; tube; (for combination circle all that apply)
- Shuttle bus
- Patient transport service
- Bike
- Combinations of public and private methods
- Other (if so, how did you get home?)

**12. How long did it take to get there?**

- Under 30 mins
- Under 45 mins
- Under 60 mins
- Between 60 - 90 mins
- Between 90 - 120 mins

- Over 2 hours
- Over 2.5 hours
- More - if so state time

**13. Can you tell us a bit more about the journeys or about journeys taken by your visitors?**

(prompts: e.g. parking provision, location of drop-off zones, anything else)

**14. What did you think of the facilities during your stay?**

(prompts ....e.g did you stay in one of the single en-suite rooms? If so, did it meet or exceed your expectations? Costa? Shop? Food?)

**15. What about the staff? Did they:**

- Positively welcome you (on arrival for your operation, on admissions to the ward etc, did staff say hello and introduce themselves? Were staff polite, patient and approachable?)
- Communicate clearly with you during your stay (e.g. daily plan, estimated discharge date etc, did staff listen? Were they honest with you about what to expect/care and treatment?)
- Visibly reassure you (Did staff inform you/update you about what was happening and let you know what to expect without you having to ask?)
- Actively respect you (Did staff maintain your privacy and dignity? Did they say thank you? Were you involved in decisions that affected you? Address you by your preferred name?)

Any other comments about staff?

**16. How long was your stay at Chase Farm?**

**17. How would you compare your recent experience at Chase Farm to other experiences you may have had at other hospitals?**

**18. Were all your appointments and care prior to surgery done at the Royal Free (for example blood test or your pre-operative assessment)?**

- Yes
- No - I got asked to go to Chase Farm for something  
If so, ask for detail

**19. Were you given a hospital appointment for follow up after your surgery?**

If so, was this at Chase Farm or the Royal Free?

**20. Did the communication between Chase Farm and Royal Free about your treatment and care go smoothly?**

21. Do you feel you were kept fully informed every step of the way?
22. Would you recommend choosing Chase Farm for surgery to other Camden-based patients?
- Yes
  - No
23. On a scale of 1 - 10 (with 1 being extremely poor and 10 being excellent, 9 = extremely good 8 = very good 7 = good 6 = quite good 5 = neither good nor poor 4 = quite poor 3 = poor 2 = very poor) how would you rate your overall experience of going to Chase Farm?
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(circle)
24. Do you have any suggestions about how your experience at Chase Farm could have been improved?
25. How would you describe your ethnicity?
26. How would you like to describe your gender?
27. Would you mind telling us your age?
28. Are you registered disabled?

## Annex 3: Reporting data - patient interviewee characteristics

1. Was the interviewee a patient at a Camden GP practice?

Borough	Number of patients
Barnet	2
Brent	1
Camden	22
Total	25

2. For what procedure did the patient attend Chase Farm?

Procedure	Number of patients
Cancer Surgery	1
Carpal Tunnel	1
Diagnostic Laparoscopy	1
Fibroids/Biopsy	1
Gynaecology	2
Hand	1
Hernia	2
Hip Replacement	5
Hysteroscopy	1
Knee operation	4
Ligament reconstruction	1
Meniscectomy	1
Remove metal plate in the arm	1
Umbilical Hernia	1
Vascular surgery	2
Total	25

3. How does the patient wish to describe their ethnicity?

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number who reported</b>
African	1
Anglo Indian	1
Bengali Asian	1
British	1
British Asian	1
British Indian	1
British White	1
British/English	1
British-Spanish	1
Irish	3
Mixed	1
Mixed British	1
Not white, Others	1
White	1
White Australian	1
White British	6
White Caucasian	1
White European	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

4. How does the patient wish to describe their gender?

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of patients</b>
Female	15
Heterosexual	1
Male	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

5. Age of patients.

Age Group	Number of patients	Average Age
20-30	1	20
30-40	3	38
40-50	5	46
50-60	2	58
60-70	4	64
70-80	8	76
80-90	2	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>60</b>

6. Does the patient live with a disability?

Disability	Number of patients
No	21
Yes	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

## Healthwatch Camden

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