

CHASE FARM

What local people think about the proposals to reduce the opening times of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital

A report by Healthwatch Enfield

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Executive Summary

The Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital opened in 2013 to replace the Accident and Emergency department (A&E), which was closed as part of the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Clinical Strategy aiming to reconfigure local urgent and emergency services.

The new Urgent Care Centre was developed alongside a new Paediatric Assessment Unit and an Older Peoples Assessment Unit. The Paediatric Unit closed in 2017 whilst the Older Peoples Assessment Unit remains open daily, from 9am to 7pm.

Since its inception, the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital has seen over 180,000 patients¹. The Centre is currently open from 8am - 10pm seven days a week.

In June 2019, NHS Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group commenced engagement on the proposal to change the closing time of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital from 10pm to 9pm. This is because *'the busiest hours at the UCC are 8am -12 noon. The last hour of service between 9-10pm is the quietest hour of the day, with 1,139 attendances in 2018 according to data provided by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. This is an average of 3-4 patients who present in the last hour and this is 2.75% of daily activity'*².

During a three-week period in July 2019, Healthwatch Enfield engaged with 372 local residents to hear their views about the proposal to reduce the opening hours of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital.

84% of local people, who provided feedback to Healthwatch Enfield, did not agree with the proposal. Our research findings suggest that the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital is seen as a valuable resource. Those we heard from, were concerned that the proposed changes:

- will further reduce the provision of urgent care services in Enfield
- will make accessing urgent care services in Enfield more difficult
- will have an impact on A&E departments and the ambulance service

Data collected indicates that **less than a third of people (32%) would attend the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital within two hours of its closing time.** This finding correlates with patient views relating to not attending the service close to the current closing time in fear of not getting seen and could play a role in the current low use of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital in the last hour of opening.

Local people have also told us that there are several other factors that affect the utilisation of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital. These include:

- confusion about the current opening times
- confusion about what the Urgent Care Centre is for
- lack of information about the Urgent Care Centre

¹ NHS England, A&E Attendances and Emergency Admissions, 2013 - 2019 ([link](#))

² Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group, Proposed changes to opening hours: Chase Farm Hospital Urgent Care Centre, 24th June 2019 ([link](#))

Based on local residents' feedback, **Healthwatch Enfield** recommends that NHS Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group working with NHS Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group and the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust:

- (1) maintains opening times of the Urgent Care Centre from 8:00am to 10:00pm so that residents can attend up to 10:00pm and be seen
- (2) works with local people and stakeholders to develop ways to raise awareness of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm so that use of available resources is maximised. Any solutions developed should ensure that:
 - opening times are clear, including that patients can attend up to 10:00pm to be seen
 - treatments, procedures and conditions that can be dealt with by the Urgent Care Centre are clear

Utilising our expertise and connections to the local communities, we would be happy to support this work, if resourced.

Methodology

Between 2nd and 19th July 2019, Healthwatch Enfield engaged with 372 local residents to hear their views about the proposal to change the closing time of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital.

Individuals views and opinions were collected via:

- face-to-face engagement at 'pop-up stalls' at local hospitals such as the North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust and Chase Farm Hospital, part of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
- face-to-face discussions at community engagement events
- an online survey which was promoted via the Healthwatch Enfield newsletter and social media channels, in addition to local community groups such as The Palmers Green Community and Love Your Doorstep

A semi structured survey was used to assess:

- individuals' past experiences of using the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital
- individuals' views on the proposal to reduce the opening times of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital from 10:00pm to 9:00pm

Due to the voluntary nature of individuals' participation in the conversations, a standard set of data was developed but a complete set was not collected for each individual. Therefore, the sample size varies depending on information provided. Not all data will tally due to rounding.

Findings

People's experiences of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital

Our research findings suggest that the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital is a valuable resource as almost three quarters (74%) of individuals, who engaged in conversations with Healthwatch Enfield, told us that their health problem was dealt with when they attended the Centre.

'I fell down the stairs and tore a ligament off the bone. The Urgent Care Centre was able to quickly give me an x ray and identify the injury. Much quicker than sitting in and A&E department for hours.'

'They were very efficient and quick'

'Brilliant, impressed they dealt with my problem.'

'I had a physical health concern, I attended the Urgent Care Centre and was treated immediately, which meant I did not need to attend A&E.'

'My last visit at the Urgent Care Centre was very good. I was impressed and would definitely go there again.'

'I have recently had reason to use the Urgent Care Centre and found it very useful it was a short wait before being seen which was less stressful for my 4-year-old'

'I think the service that both I and friends and family visiting Chase Farm Urgent Care has been extremely good and timely'

'When I used it for my mother it was an excellent service'

Those who were unable to get treated at Chase Farm Hospital Urgent Care Centre reported that they were referred on to a local A&E department due to the acuity of their presenting problem, or back to their GP for further ongoing care.

'Young baby with high temperature was treated and then transferred to hospital.'

'I took an elderly relative who had a bad fall. They asked me to go to Barnet Hospital instead'

'Assessed my injury, referred me for an x-ray and requested my GP refer me to a physiotherapist.'

What local people think about the proposals to change the closing time of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital?

84% of local people who engaged in conversations with Healthwatch Enfield did not agree with the proposal to reduce the opening hours of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital. Those we heard from, were concerned that the proposed changes:

- will further reduce the provision of urgent care services in Enfield

'I feel that it should stay open late to reduce the pressure at A&E. I myself have attended quite late as I had needed to organise someone to look after my children at home before I could attend the Urgent Care Centre.'

'Not everyone can leave work early so having it open till late is useful.'

'I don't know what other service is available after 9pm for people who might need it'

'We need as many extended hours services as possible. Ideally 24 hours but at least late enough so people getting home from work in the city, which is about 20:00, would still have time to take their sick child or relative to Chase Farm'

'We already have lost Chase Farm A&E, it's the only local hospital for many'

'Residents of the local area have the right to access emergency services especially since our A&E department has closed.'

- will make accessing urgent care services in Enfield more difficult

'Because public transport to reach either Barnet or North Mid is becoming less frequent/more challenging at this time of night so people who do not have own transport or who cannot afford taxis are disadvantaged. It is further erosion of health services.'

'Even though there may only be a few people between 9pm and 10pm, where do these few people go? Barnet is miles away for some people living in certain parts of the borough and so is North Middlesex. At that time of night, public transport is infrequent'

'The people needing it from 9pm will have to go too far for treatment'

'We have recently used the service and was told the nearest alternative is Finchley. This could cause transport issues and also could mean that patients condition worsens by the time they get help.'

'Getting to Barnet or North Middlesex hospitals is not easy at the best of times but late in the evening is even more difficult. If my mother was still alive & had to travel to either of these other hospitals, she would have been dead before she arrived'

'The A&E services for North Enfield and Enfield town are appallingly bad - miles to get to one of the two nearest A&E centres. It's a disgrace'

- will have an impact on A&E departments and the ambulance service

'It would make the North Middlesex Hospital even more busy and affect waiting times there - people work till late and all hours and the later the opening time, the better.'

'As it is there, is no A&E nearby so the Urgent Care Centre should stay open until at least 10. Otherwise it will mean travelling to North Mid or Barnet, not only inconvenient to patients but this would put further pressure on these already overstretched A&E.'

'When they were introduced, we were told that it would relieve the pressure on A&E units. Earlier closure is now moving the problem back to the A&E units.'

'999 will be called a lot more, for matters that could have been seen to at urgent care. Ambulance services will be over stretch and won't be able to keep up with the demand'

Based on data collected by Healthwatch Enfield, 77% of residents engaged with indicated they would attend a local A&E department if the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital was closed.

Are there any factors that impact the utilisation of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital?

Based on feedback and data analysis carried out by Healthwatch Enfield, there are several factors that affect the utilisation of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital. These include:

- confusion about the current opening times

'I attended late one Saturday 30 mins before closing and the place was packed, I was turned away as they were so busy and told to go to Barnet A&E'

'This facility is used by many people; it has been fully occupied every time I have visited. Officials may say that it is not used after 8.45 most days but this is because people have been told it is shut.'

'Chase Farm Urgent Care Centre turns you away before 10pm already, hence the low apparent usage - the figures quoted are manipulated. But 2.7% is probably 1000s of people anyway!'

'It should be open till 10pm. Currently if patients come earlier than 10pm they are told they are fully booked and turned away; this happen 30 minutes before the closing time. I have seen this. 10pm is perfect and please do not change it'

- confusion about what the Urgent Care Centre is for

'Not enough people know that this is a walk-in centre and that is why it is being underused'

'More advertising might be needed on the service at Chase Farm and what people can attend with as still get people going to North Middlesex unnecessarily'

'There not enough publicity about the service and what it can and can't treat'

'There needs to be better education for the public what condition needs to be seen where. To most of the public we view all of these services as generic casualty departments and people do not understand the difference between an Urgent Care Centre and A&E'

- lack of information about the Urgent Care Centre

'A leaflet should be sent to all constituents of Enfield North and Enfield Southgate, so they are aware of this service. This is the first time I heard of the service and I would of went there if 111 didn't refer me to North Middlesex hospital'

'A campaign to raise awareness should be explored first before early closure.'

'The public should be made more aware of the support that they can receive from the Urgent Care Centre so that it is fully utilised'

'Better promotion of the services on offer at Urgent Care is needed as many people are uncertain of the differences between them so generally opt for the A&E as they are sure it will cover their needs'

'There should be more and there needs to be more exposure, this is the first time I have heard of this and I am absolutely annoyed, disappointed and disgusted that this had not been mentioned and I guarantee if you do a survey to all tenants of Enfield Southgate and Enfield North that the majority would have known that this did not exist'

Understanding the closing times of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital

The publicity provided to support the engagement on the proposal to reduce the opening hours of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital reads *'the busiest hours at the UCC are 8am -12 noon. The last hour of service between 9-10pm is the quietest hour of the day, with 1,139 attendances in 2018 according to data provided by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. This is an average of 3-4 patients who present in the last hour and this is 2.75% of daily activity'*³.

Data collected by Healthwatch Enfield indicates that **less than a third of people (32%) would attend the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital within two hours of its closing time.**

'I think there is confusion about opening times and what people can access there'

'The main reason people are less likely to go is probably as they are concerned it is close to the end of the present closing time so it would only make this occur an hour earlier'

'The last hour (whatever time it is) will always be quieter. People think, "It's closing in half an hour, better go to A&E'

'I think the reason that the last hour is quiet is because I have "heard" that they are effectively closed by nine anyway. I would not go there if I wasn't sure I would be helped.'

'Staff will stop seeing people at the time which will let staff go home closest to 9pm and will tell people that they are too full to see them before closing time'

'People will be put off going in the evening in case they don't get seen at all'

This finding correlates with patient views relating to not attending the service close to the current closing time in fear of not getting seen and could play a role in the current low use of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital in the last hour of opening.

³Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group, Proposed changes to opening hours: Chase Farm Hospital Urgent Care Centre, 24th June 2019 ([link](#))

Conclusions

Our evidence base suggests that 84% of Enfield residents, who engaged in conversations about the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital, feel that the closing time should not be changed. Local people told us about the lack of urgent and emergency care services available in Enfield and there were concerns about the impact the changes would have on neighbouring 'overstretched' A&E departments. We also heard about the lack of information available about the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital.

Healthwatch Enfield recommends that Enfield CCG considers the evidence base presented in this report to aid their decision-making on changing the closing time of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm Hospital.

Based on local residents' feedback, **Healthwatch Enfield recommends** that NHS Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group working with NHS Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group and the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust:

- (1) maintain opening times of the Urgent Care Centre from 8:00am to 10:00pm so that residents can attend up to 10:00pm and be seen
- (2) works with local people and stakeholders to develop ways to raise awareness of the Urgent Care Centre at Chase Farm so that use of available resources is maximised. Any solutions developed should ensure that:
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Appendix 1 Demographics data

What is your ethnic origin?

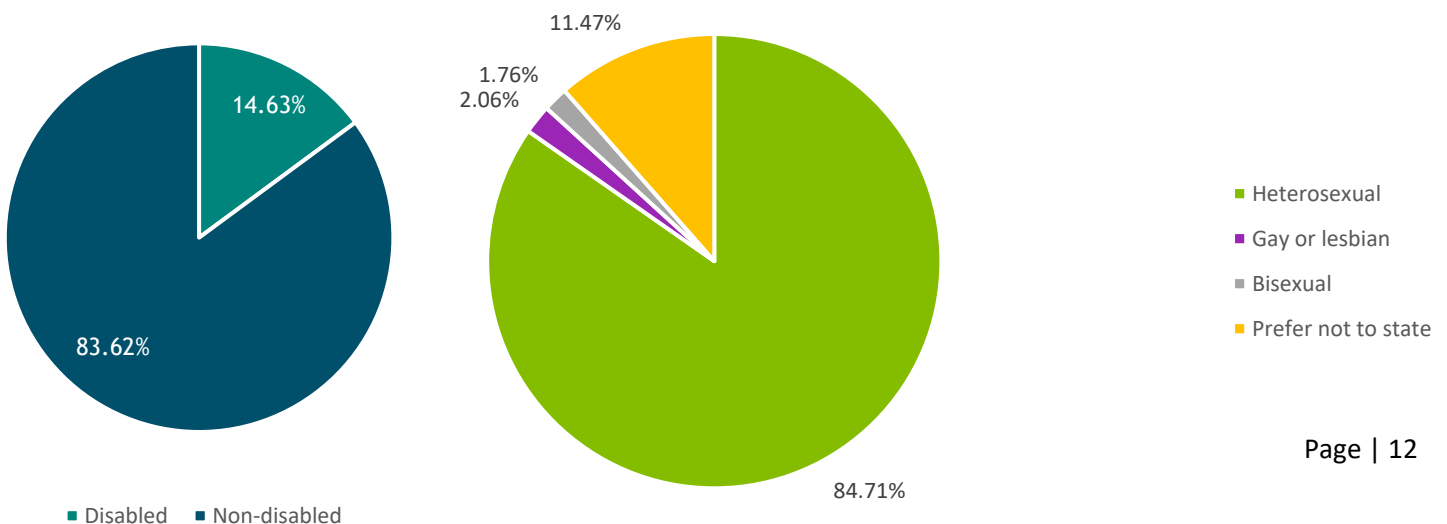
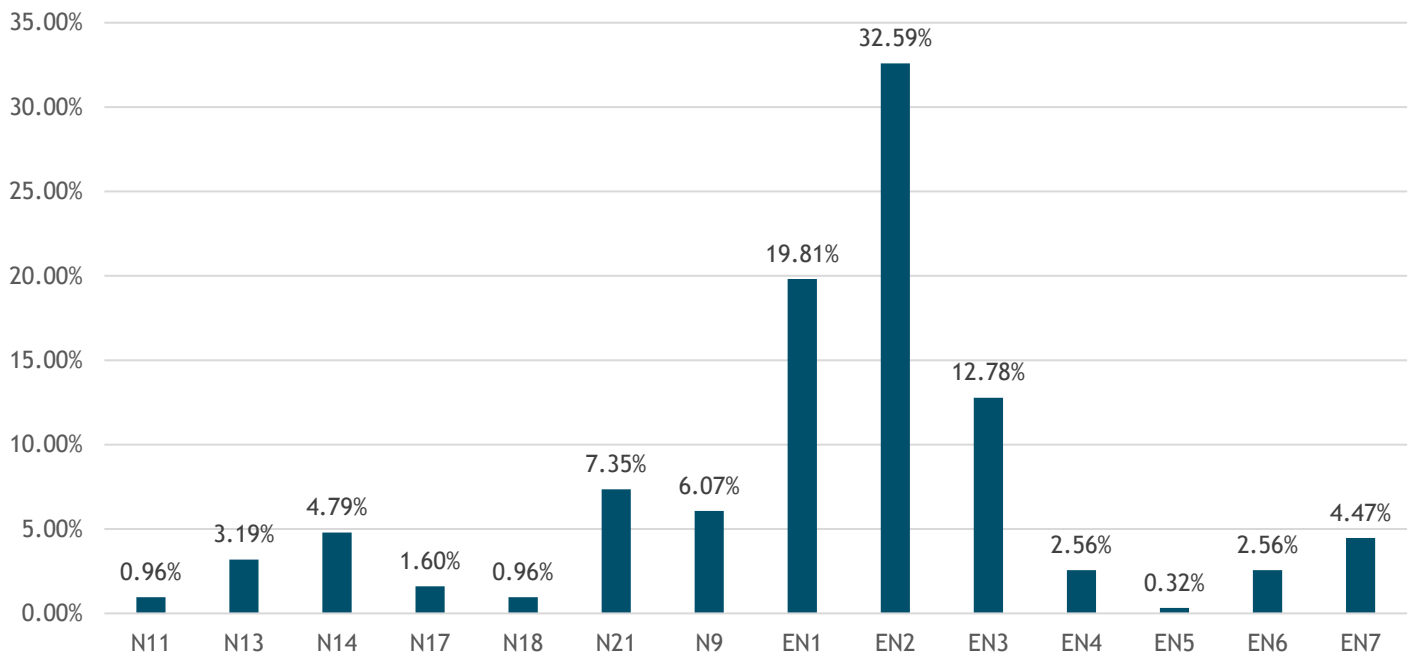
Asian/Asian British	4.45%
Bangladeshi	0.30%
Indian	1.19%
Any other Asian Background	0.59%
African	6.82%
Black/Black British	1.19%
Caribbean	2.08%
White and Black Caribbean	0.59%
White and Black African	0.30%
White and Asian	0.59%
Any other mixed background	1.19%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	63.5%
Irish	5.04%
Any other white background	11.28%
Arab	0.59%
Prefer not to state	0.30%

Are you a carer?

Yes	16.76%
No	83.24%

What is your religion?

Buddhist	0.30%
Christian	51.63%
Hindu	1.19%
Jewish	2.67%
Muslim	6.82%
Other	0.59%
No religion	28.49%
I'd prefer not to say	8.31%





This report can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print, and may be available in alternative languages, upon request.

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