

Home from Hospital Service Report

2016-2018



The background

Age UK Barnet was delighted to be successful in the local authority's 2016 tender to deliver a Home from Hospital Service for older people aged 65 and over in the borough.

It was an ideal addition to our suite of services for older people which includes Handyperson, Later Life Planning, Falls Prevention as well as social activities such as lunch clubs, digital inclusion, activity groups and befriending.

Taking on the contract meant following in the footsteps of the previous holders, the British Red Cross (BRC) who continued their presence in the borough through a further Home from Hospital Service funded by Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Both organisations had to come together to establish a productive working relationship and ensure a smooth operation for referrers and above all for clients in need of the service.

Age UK Barnet took on former BRC staff members Sue O'Keefe and Pauline Mitchell under TUPE arrangements. Both responded professionally to the challenges involved in changing employer, yet essentially continuing in the same role, and their expertise and experience have proved invaluable to Age UK Barnet.

Where does the service operate?

The team work from both Barnet General Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, where they have built valuable links with discharge coordinators, ward staff, therapists and social work teams. It receives referrals from all

the hospitals in the borough as well as specialists outside it such as University College Hospital and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore for patients who live in Barnet. The team is often the first to visit these clients once they are home and can highlight any concerns about the home environment to the social work team, effectively being their 'eyes and ears'.

The service is aimed at older people who need support after discharge but for whom a reablement or care package may not be necessary or appropriate.

What does the service offer?

Coming home after a spell in hospital, whether it has been long or short, can be a shock to the system for an older person, especially if they live alone. That's where our service comes in, to offer low level practical and emotional support in order to help people readjust and regain their confidence.

After an initial assessment by staff, trained volunteers visit older people at home. They provide help with essential shopping, catching up on post or simply offering companionship or someone with a friendly face to talk to. They might also help an older person go for a walk, get organised with their appointments or do some online shopping.

The Home from Hospital Service received **615** referrals and supported **552** individuals between May 2016 and September 2018. **70%** of these people lived alone in their homes, making the team a vital point of contact and support. **80%** were over 75 years old. Usually medically well enough to be discharged

from hospital without a package of care from the local authority, Home from Hospital clients can feel isolated and struggle to readjust to life without the support they have been used to from hospital staff. Anxiety can impede recovery and cause them to call GPs, hospital wards or even 999 for reassurance.

One of the key aims of the service is to prevent unnecessary readmission to hospital. As you can see from the table below, **80%** of referred clients remained at home during Home from Hospital intervention:

Time frame	Number of referrals	Readmissions
May 2016-March 2017	243	50
April 2017-March 2018	259	76
April 2018-Sept 2018	113	5

Age UK Barnet's staff are proactive. They have liaised with statutory services on behalf of their clients, helped them with follow-up medical appointments, arranged visits for occupational and other therapists and collected medication from hospital or high street pharmacies. As part of Age UK Barnet's team they can seamlessly refer clients into the other services offered by the organisation. The Handyman Service has moved beds and other furniture to make way for hospital equipment and the Later Life Planning Service has supported them to claim benefits, make changes to their housing arrangements and, crucially, plan for later life with advice on wills and Powers of Attorney. Age UK Barnet's

activity programme is made available to all those referred to the service and clients are supported to make choices about attending exercise classes, digital inclusion sessions or lunch clubs and other social groups.

This is where the local knowledge of our staff and volunteers is of particular value to the clients and the service. They know that social support and activity is a key factor in improving wellbeing and they support clients to engage in their local community.

Our Home from Hospital Volunteers

Age UK Barnet recruited **16 volunteers**, including two who had formerly volunteered for the Red Cross Service, and they have supported the service since May 2016. One of them is **Susan Read** who has been volunteering for over a year and sees one client a week, visiting each client three or four times to get them back on their feet after hospital.

“Many of the people I see are housebound, frail and lonely. I will do shopping for them, collect prescriptions, Hoover, make a sandwich or go for a walk with them. But 95% of the time they just want to sit and chat.

“Some people might take a bit longer, but most will open up about their lives and, as a result, I have just met so many lovely people.

“I recently met a husband and wife who had worked together on breakthrough Aids research, and it was inspiring to hear their story. In fact, I have learnt so much from meeting with my clients over the year, it’s shown me what a difference a positive

attitude can have to getting older, something I hope to remember myself.

“I really clicked with two of my clients and they’ve actually become friends.

“Edna who is 98 is as sharp as a tack – a fabulous, fascinating woman. I truly enjoy her company – and now I see her every week as a friend and we go for walks together. She loves hearing about my day as it opens out the world to her.

“Another client, Vicky, was a journalist for the Financial Times. She’s incredibly good company and we meet up regularly to go to art exhibitions.

“The hardest part of volunteering for Home from Hospital is just giving people 3 or 4 visits, then having to walk away. On that last visit, it’s heart-breaking when someone asks, ‘Could you please come again?’ when you know you just can’t do it.

“Luckily I can refer people on to other Age UK Barnet services – befriending, in particular, music or lunch clubs, for instance, to keep them connected. But it still can be hard to leave them.

“I love volunteering for Home from Hospital not only because I feel better for having contributed something, but it’s been a privilege to meet so many wonderful people who have done so many interesting things in their life.”

Case Study: George and Molly

George is 89 and was discharged from Finchley Memorial Hospital in February 2017. He had a diagnosis of dementia and was living at home with his wife, Molly, who had MS so staff at

Finchley Memorial had initially considered a transfer to residential care but in the end sent him home with a package of care. George was initially referred to Age UK Barnet in mid-January so the team had been in touch regularly with ward staff to check when he would get home. Molly initially declined the service as she felt she could manage but that situation changed when she had a nasty fall and was admitted to hospital herself.

George was extremely distressed as he didn't know where Molly, his wife of more than 60 years, was. The couple also had good relationships with a neighbour, Maria, herself an Age UK Barnet client, and Delicia, a Befriending Service volunteer. Pauline from the Home from Hospital team made several phone calls to locate Molly and, after speaking to neighbour Maria, established she was in Northwick Park Hospital. George was extremely distressed without Molly and again it looked like a move to residential care was likely. Pauline relayed her concerns to the social worker, who increased the package of care, and Pauline then liaised with Finchley Memorial to establish what support had actually been put in place on George's discharge. Following this George was visited by the social worker and the occupational therapist at home. Pauline reported he was much brighter on her next visit perhaps because they talked about Newcastle United!

Pauline did more than provide companionship for George; she contacted the phone engineer when his phone appeared to be out of order and then later cancelled this after discovering the problem was with the handset. She also removed faulty heaters from the premises after becoming aware they were

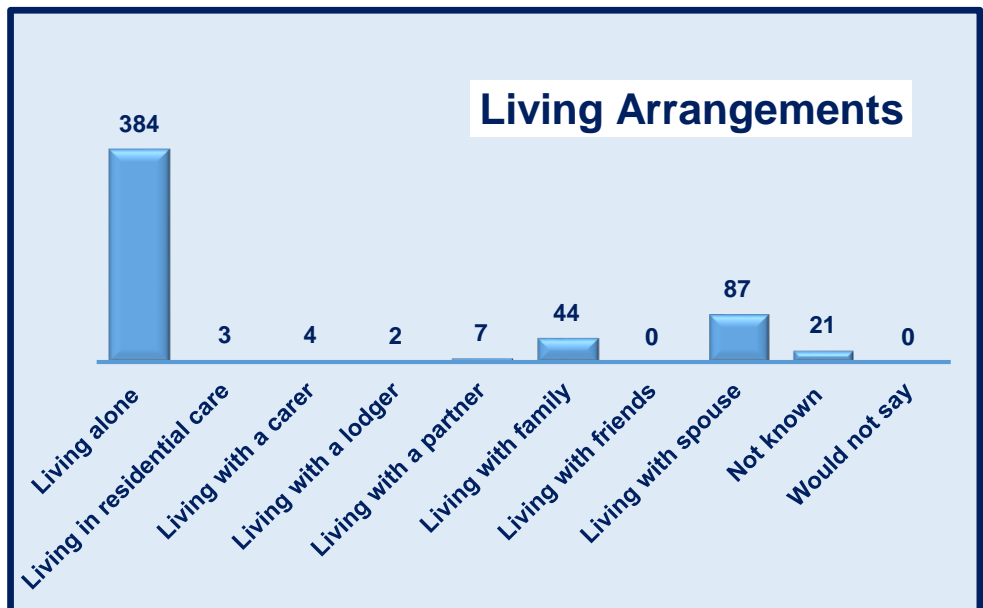
giving off a burning smell and contacted London Fire Brigade for a fire safety check. In addition, she liaised with the Befriending Service to organise for George to attend a music session with transport.

Pauline and George’s social worker also took him to see Molly in hospital which really made a difference to him.

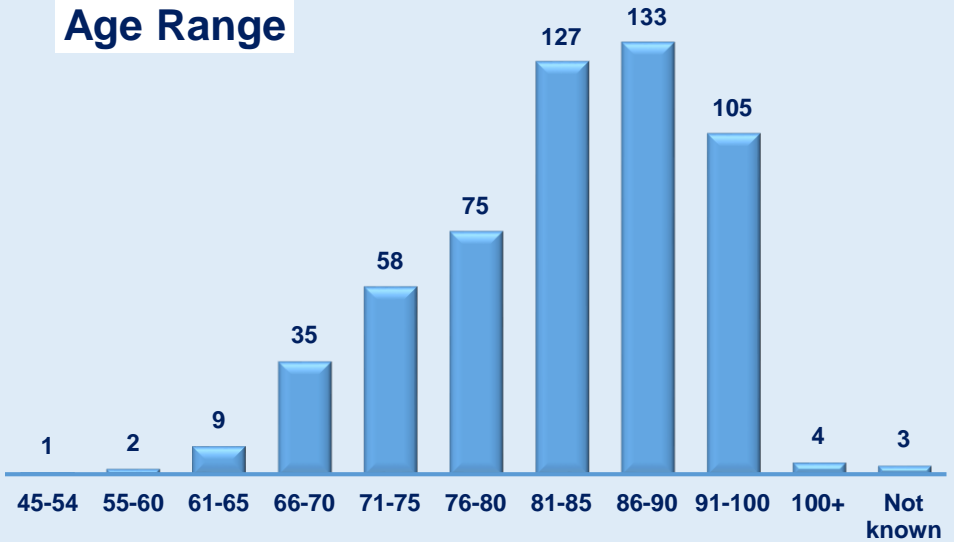
Client feedback:

“The service is irreplaceable for the help it gave me and others. Pauline has gone out of her way to help me, listening to my problems which were exacerbated by the hip operation and give me much appreciated advice as well as taking me out for walks and attending a follow-up appointment with me at the Royal Free.”

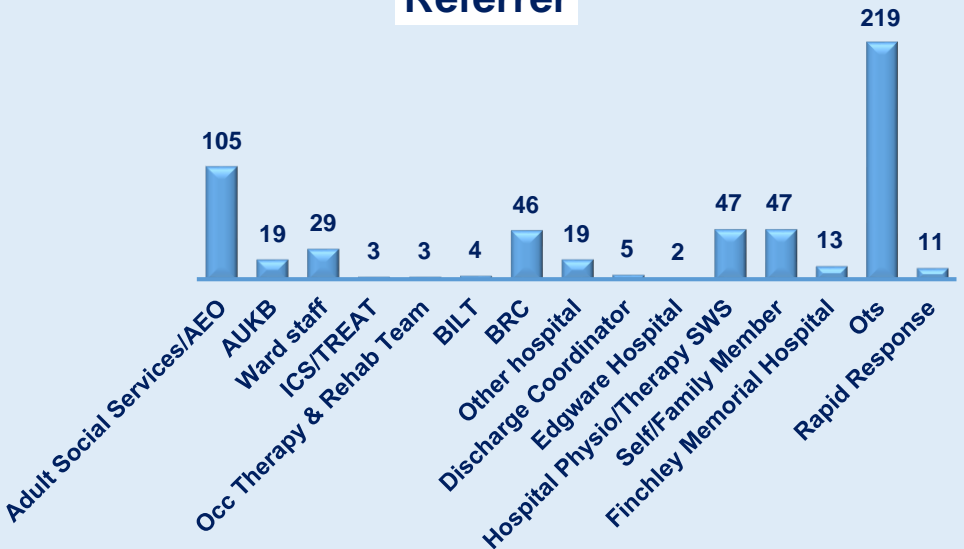
Home from Hospital Client data:

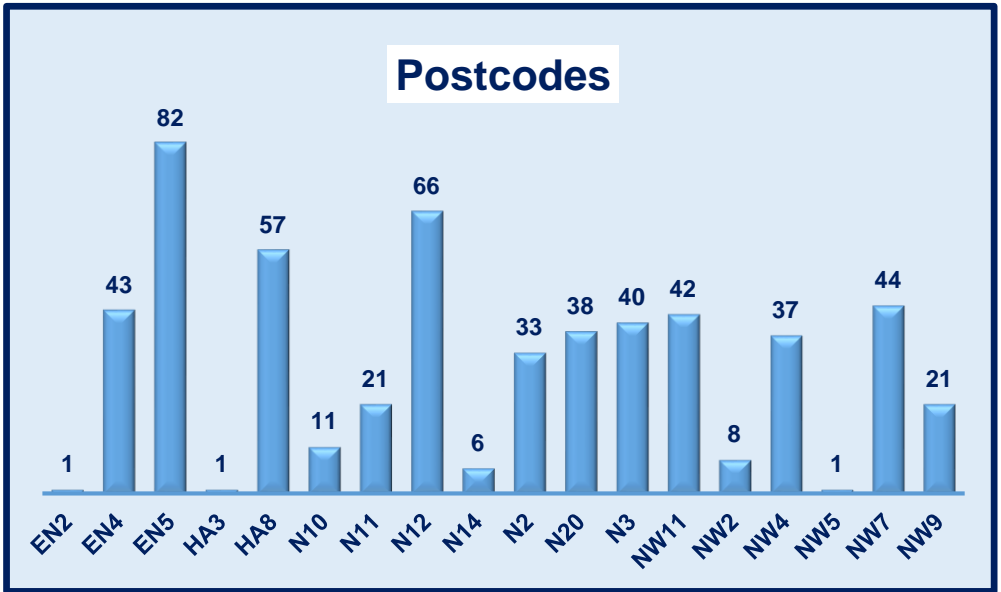


Age Range



Referrer





These reflect areas of the borough with the highest proportion of older people.

What does the future hold?

Although the continuation of this Home from Hospital contract is uncertain beyond March 2019, and Age UK Barnet is not in a position to continue it without specific funding, we are always looking to the future. The council’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) forecasts that the number of over 65s will increase by 34.5% by 2030 whilst the number aged 85 and over will increase by 66.6%. This will inevitably place pressure on hospitals in our borough and initiatives to alleviate this will be more necessary than ever.

We know that being cared for at home, when at all possible, is better for older people than being in hospital. Analysis shows that for older people 10 days in a hospital bed leads to the

equivalent of 10 years of muscle ageing, while more than a third of admissions from care homes are believed to be avoidable. Community healthcare can ease pressure on hospital staff, free up much-needed beds and help cut waiting times.

Organisations such as ours could and should play a role in supporting older adults in community healthcare. Age UK's work on integrated care pilot schemes demonstrates the positive outcomes that are possible from such joined up working. It brings together voluntary organisations and health and care services in local areas to provide an innovative combination of medical and non-medical support for older people who are living with multiple long term conditions and are at risk of recurring hospital admissions.

Within the Age UK networks there are a number of examples of good practice in this area and in other initiatives such as Take Home and Settle, where volunteers do exactly that with older people discharged from hospital. This reduces stress for patients and hospital staff by removing the need for specialist transport.

Age UK Barnet would welcome the opportunity to be involved in planning and implementing the local response to the challenges faced by statutory services. With our growing reach in the community, local network, strong volunteer presence and track record in service delivery we are uniquely placed to do so.

About Age UK Barnet

Age UK Barnet is a voluntary organisation existing to serve and promote the interests of all older citizens of the London Borough of Barnet, from all works of life and ethnic communities.

We provide many activities, services and information about issues of interest to older people through our centres and in the community.

Activities and services include:

- Later Life Planning including benefits advice
- Scams Prevention and Support Programme
- Fitness and exercise classes
- Befriending Service
- Handyperson Service
- Computer training and assisted computer access
- Lunch clubs, social groups and other activities

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Our strategic aims and objectives

- To provide, commission or support others to deliver a range of quality services and initiatives that address those issues which are important to older people in the London Borough of Barnet
- To reduce isolation and promote an independent lifestyle for older people in the London Borough of Barnet
- To promote a positive view of the contribution that older people make to society
- To help older people in the London Borough of Barnet to remain living in their own homes for as long as they wish to do so
- To campaign to improve services locally

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