

Mental health patients forced to move out of the borough

by TOM FOOT

NHS chiefs have apologised after several of the borough's most vulnerable patients were told they will be moved into private hospitals for a year because of construction delays to a flagship new health centre.

Mental health patients sectioned to St Pancras Hospital are being transferred to wards run by Cygnet, a company owned by US health giant, several miles away in south and west London.

Camden and Islington Foundation Trust said its £70million 84-bed hospital in Highgate will not be ready on time because of unforeseen delays in the construction process.

Patients were due to be moved there before January when Moorfields Eye Hospital has a deal



How the new hospital in Highgate will look

to move some of its operations onto the St Pancras site.

One source said: "It's a really big upheaval for these kind of patients to be moved in this way, and then for them to be moved again. It's also very expensive for the NHS to have to pay for private wards for so long."

The transfer of NHS patients to private providers is a costly affair and also frowned upon by relatives who often have to travel further distances to see loved ones.

Clinicians also struggle

to liaise with different providers despite insisting there will be continuity of care.

Cygnet is wholly-owned by Universal Health Services in the US.

A memo sent to GPs this week said: "They (C&I) have explored the use of other NHS facilities and there are none suitable that are available, or could be made available, in time."

The St Pancras Hospital site is being redeveloped by Moorfields and the King's Cross developer Argent.

A consultation on what will be built on part of the site is due to begin next month.

A C&I spokeswoman said: "The building programme for our new hospital at Highgate, like many other construction schemes, was delayed during the Covid pandemic. There was also some delay because additional structural work was needed to prepare for occupying the new site, which had not been envisaged until the buildings previously on the site were demolished.

"We are sorry service users and their friends and families are being inconvenienced by the new facilities not opening as was originally planned, however, these delays were outside of our control and we are taking every measure possible to provide the very best care for those affected by this change."

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