

School Lane Surgery

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

(Condensed)

Thursday 21st March 2024

1. Introduction

This evening we welcomed Liz to the fold: our newest member has a hearing impairment, so we will need to ensure our discussions are heard by all.

2. Previous minutes

The minutes for our previous meeting in January were approved.

3. Future of the PPG and Code of Conduct

We had a brief discussion about the direction of our group, and the suggestion that we keep it light and informal made sense to all present. We do have a code of conduct, as is required, but it is common sense stuff and we are unlikely to ever need to invoke the rules.

Members are asked to examine the draft Code of Conduct, and raise any relative points at our next meeting. The draft document is included in the pack handed out to members this evening.

The surgery has spoken to the editor of About Thetford magazine regarding a regular article dedicated to all things (GP) Surgery e.g. health visitors, the PPG, booster jabs etc.

The practice employs a company that manages digital/online services, to professionalise any promotional videos and administer the Facebook page: a forum for the PPG could be added to this; and it would be a secure service, where members are invited in. We should also consider a WhatsApp group?

4. Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection

The recent phone discussions with the CQC were interesting, with their questioner talking to both members of the PPG and surgery staff. The surgery provided a spreadsheet with relevant information, and it was gratifying to be informed we had achieved a 'Good' rating. Marc expressed his thanks to all staff, particularly Sarah, who had pulled all the evidence together for the CQC inspection.

As a matter of interest: the CQC is not able to sack anybody, but they can stop a surgery from practicing at a particular address. Inspections are expected to be held every 3 to 5 years.

5. NHS Structure – Presentation by Marc (School Lane Business Manager)

Marc gave the group a most comprehensive presentation on how the NHS is structured and somehow pulls together to provide the service we all know and love. We were very grateful for the NHS Structure printout that was provided by the surgery, as we would never remember the half of it otherwise!

What patients generally do not realise is that GP Practices are a privately run business, and that they are subcontracted to the NHS. In some places there are GP Practices struggling to survive, and when a Practice runs out of money, the doors close. This may be a temporary measure, until further funding can be found, but some are giving up altogether. There is concern that GP surgeries are going the same way as dental surgeries, where they are not getting enough money to do the job.

When a patient goes to hospital, as an inpatient or outpatient, there is no financial burden placed on the surgery. But, in a similar way to the GP Practice, when the money is used up the doors close (for the non-emergency cases: these patients are added to the already long waiting lists).

6. Practice Updates & News

An A4 print-out was handed to members; also attached to these minutes. It includes staffing updates, compliments, complaints, and significant events.

Patients are being asked to use the surgery website where possible, to ask for an appointment or make general enquiries. This method of contact is just as quick as making a phone call, with all requests going to the same triage team.

Every single patient seen by a Physician Associate is double-checked by a GP. All GP surgeries are run differently, and new patients don't always understand that it can be a different experience.

The upper floor of the Healthy Living Centre has been mostly office space since it was built, but the recent building works has seen much alteration and this space has been reassigned as 13 waiting areas and consulting rooms: these facilities will be utilised by West Suffolk Hospital outpatient clinics. In addition to the upgrade on the upper floor, School Lane Surgery has been allocated an extra 3 rooms downstairs. This means we now have 9 rooms at our disposal, while Grove Lane Surgery has 4.

The latest COVID booster is due to be rolled out shortly, with the 75+ age group being first on the list. In the second phase, it will be younger patients, but only those that are considered vulnerable.

7. Other Business

- a) **Zero tolerance** – there has been an increase in the level of abuse aimed at staff members, mostly by a vocal minority. Where behaviour is found to be unacceptable, the event is logged and the patient will receive a letter of warning. The surgery would not have removed a patient from the practice list in the past, but this is no longer the case and abusive patients can expect to be asked to leave.
- b) **New registrations** – new members are always welcomed warmly, and have tended to pick things up quickly. In future any potential new member will be given our Terms of Reference, which includes the Code of Conduct, and a copy of the last 2 meetings minutes, so they can familiarise themselves.
- c) **Active Norfolk** – this organisation advertises weight management, exercise, and fall prevention classes, but they do not run unless they achieve an attendance of 30 participants; this target is often not reached, and Thetford is not among those few that do.

Below are some links to relevant websites, though mental health and addiction problems are under the remit of our own Social Prescriber, Andrea, and patients are likely to have more success with her.

Adult weight management: www.yourhealthnorfolk.co.uk/weight-management

Active Norfolk: www.activenorfolk.org

Everyone's Active GP Exercise Referral: www.everyoneactive.com/content-hub/health/gp-referral

Helping you live your life: www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/norfolk

Broadly Active: www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communities/broadly-active

The Broadly Active link above shows the only activity held in Thetford is the Parkrun.

8. Further Meeting Dates

- a) Thursday 16th May b) Thursday 18th July c) Thursday 19th September d) Thursday 21st November

9. Thoughts for our next meeting

- a) Open meeting with the public – Q&A from the audience, invite local media, get high school kids views, immigrant patients encouraged to attend (by Andrea, our Social Prescriber) – thoughts please?
- b) Thetford magazine
- c) Ideas for expanding PPG membership: ask representative groups if they would like a voice e.g. care homes, health related support groups, immigrant centres etc.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday 16th May, 7 pm at School Lane Surgery