

School Lane Surgery

Patient Reference Group (PRG)

(Condensed)

Thursday 18th May 2023

This evening we remembered our friend and Chair, Keith Eldred. Keith was always in good cheer and we had many laughs, it will not be the same without him.

We were also joined by Josh Ball, the Project Officer for Healthwatch.

THE AGENDA

1. Previous minutes
2. Josh Ball
3. Wellbeing Hub
4. Other Business

1. Previous minutes

The minutes for our previous meeting are approved.

2. Josh Ball of Healthwatch

Josh was thanked for coming to the surgery to help us better promote the independent patient voice. He is also in contact with ICS (Integrated Care Systems, that was the CCG) to help improve things for patients. The Healthwatch toolkit, NHS Youth Forum brochure and Patient Participation Group Report Summary pdf documents were forwarded to the group and will need careful study, being quite lengthy documents, they are crammed with useful tips and information.

The recruiting of new members to our Patient Reference Group (PRG) has never been easy, especially in the case of the younger generations, and we are hoping this aim might be achieved via digital means. Younger people have time in the evening, when they may welcome the chance to become involved.

There has been a change in the patient demographic in Thetford and surrounding area, and in many other parts of the country, and those on our books now include around 33% of their number being mostly Polish or Portuguese, plus other nationalities in smaller numbers. These groups have proved particularly hard to recruit, they having become used to very different healthcare systems in their country of origin.

It was suggested we might join with other surgeries to become more of a voice, which has been tried once before and did not get very far. Is it time to try again?

Perhaps a poster and/or flyers should be designed to promote and recruit. A younger audience must be encouraged to become more involved, it's their healthcare too. Though they might think it would make little or no difference, the PRG is better informed and time spent discussing health matters is more useful than being sat in front of the TV or playing computer games.

It was suggested the PRG set up a Facebook page, but this would require administration and a moderator, perhaps too much for our small group. It could be for information only, which would be easier, but there would be no facility for patients to leave comment. There will be a feasibility study to see if the PRG might piggyback on the Practice Facebook page.

3. Wellbeing Hub

There is lots of things happening at the mental health hub REST (Recover, Eat, Support & Talk), now open at Breckland House in Thetford, and the surgery is hoping we will help to spread the message. The surgery is involved in the shape of Andrea (Social Prescriber), doing coffee shops for those who need to talk, and offering help and advice to anybody who asks for it, but she can't do it all.

Having many talk services available means it can sometimes be difficult to avoid duplication, leading to a position where some of the services are being overloaded while others still wait for customers. There are some physical activity groups too, a walking group and 'man shed' being examples. Each individual activity group could be asked to promote the PRG, as with mental health now being a major focus in the town, perhaps one or two volunteers will emerge and help us to better understand the local issues.

4. Other Business

- a) Funding has been secured for a large display screen at the Healthy Living Centre.
- b) Pharmacists will soon be able to prescribe and refer to hospital, in particular for patients who have serious health issues. Some conditions will seem obvious and there may be nothing to be gained from seeing a GP before referral.
- c) Following on from discussion at previous meetings, we learned tonight that Dr Overy is now pushing the recycling agenda. The NHS generates a tremendous amount of waste and really should be looking to cut down. We know some effort has already been made in other parts of the country, to recycle empty blister packs and the cardboard they come in, and the idea of a green surgery would surely be a popular one?

NEXT MEETING: Thursday 20th July, 7 pm at School Lane Surgery