

School Lane Surgery

Patient Reference Group (PRG)

(Condensed)

Virtual Meeting: Thursday 22nd May 2021

1. Previous minutes

No issues were raised concerning the previous minutes.

2. Covid-19 update

The roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccines has gone very well and the surgeries are now inviting those in the 25 to late 30's age group to come forward for their jab.

No small part in the overall success of this operation has been played by those who have turned up at the surgeries to volunteer their services, pointing people in the right direction and generally keeping things moving. There is the National Volunteers Week from the 1st to 7th June and there will be some recognition of their efforts in the way of posters, provided by Voluntary Norfolk, and a certificate acknowledging each volunteer's input.

Thetford has done very well and the vaccination process at the Healthy Living Centre has worked extremely well. There has been much positive feedback from clinicians and patients and the vaccination rate is on target. Planning is already under way for the likely booster programme in the autumn.

There is not yet any guidance on the booster jab but it is hoped the annual flu jab can be given at the same appointment; though some are suggesting there needs to be a week between the two? There is planning going on all the time and things are likely to change as more becomes known about the various behaviours of the vaccines.

It was asked if there had been any particular logic behind the choice of vaccine administered, be it Astra Zeneca or Pfizer, but since the beginning of the roll-out the surgeries have had barely a week's notice of which vaccine they would be receiving for the next set of vaccinations. Experience has thrown up some issues and now patients under the age of 40 will only receive the Pfizer vaccine, as in some very rare cases the Astra Zeneca vaccine is thought to have caused a blood clot in younger people, and so no chances are being taken. The clinics are hoping to take delivery of the Moderna vaccine but no supplies are available to us yet. This whole task has been a huge logistical challenge for the vaccinators, especially when the rules were changed for the gap between first and second doses; from 12 weeks to 8 weeks.

Patients have complained that when they go to book their vaccination, they are offered an appointment some considerable distance away, which is purely down to the National booking system. In Thetford the GP surgeries are leading the way and when you get an invitation to have your vaccination it will be at the Healthy Living Centre. If you book your vaccination through the National Booking System, they can ask you to travel some distance, but both of these systems are due to merge and from then all appointments will be local.

As far as online GP appointments go, this facility has worked well since the beginning of the pandemic, but of course the method does not suit everybody. Patients have been able to come into the surgery when it was deemed absolutely necessary; there's no smartphone app for smear tests!

3. Year of the Nurse

Last year the WHO announced that 2020 would be the 'Year of the Nurse', but this has had to be carried over to 2021 and the nurses are now in the process of putting together an event in Thetford that will showcase the job that they have been doing. It will include talks on diabetes, cardiovascular disease, the

importance of having a smear test, the sexual health clinic, as well as heart failure and lung nurses, plus stands and a general promoting of the primary prevention programme. The nurses will also want to show how patient groups can interact and we will have an important role to play in this. It is hoped the Keystone building will be available for this showcase, as well as the surgery at the Healthy Living Centre for the stands. The basic idea is that it should be a 'something for everybody' event.

The group will be informed when a date has been set and we are invited to offer ideas about how we might work together to put on a show.

4. Staffing

Dr Suyi, who came to the practice as a registrar, is now a fully-fledged GP.

Paramedic Dan McDermot has joined the practice and is part of the triage team.

Louise Green, mental health nurse, is leaving us and her replacement is Lisa Diamond.

Karen Norcott and Annie Valuzzi of the Research Department have left the surgery and Marium Asgahr has taken over from them.

Two part-time physiotherapists are now in situ; they do some telephone as well as face to face.

A new pharmacy technician has been installed at School Lane, they will work alongside the clinical pharmacist, Jenny, who has been at the surgery around a month or so.

Since December there are 4 extra receptionists at the practice, to help deal with the new booking system.

Two of the staff ladies have been promoted to GPA.

7. Complaints, Significant Events & Compliments

There were no specific details available for this agenda item, but the numbers were not unusual and patients are generally very happy with the Covid-19 response from the surgeries; the effort being put in by admin staff and clinicians is obvious to all.

8. Other Business

- a) It was asked why the Surgery website Consulting Room is not available at the weekend?

This facility has been withdrawn on a temporary basis due to the huge amount of traffic it has tended to generate in the period of the pandemic, it's future is not yet clear as it is currently under discussion.

Some patients have found this an inconvenience and think it would help the surgery to triage better as there would probably be no need for a phone call on the Monday morning, but in response the surgery has found that patients have tended to ignore the notice that it is for non-emergency matters and those in need of more urgent attention should be ringing 111. There was also some concern of the clinical risk involved, with patients filling in a form on the Saturday and expecting a response, even when the notice states that there won't be one and it will be Monday before they are looked at; this was a concern across the whole county and not just the surgeries in Thetford. Also, patients have filled in the online form when they felt unwell over the weekend, only to wake up on Monday morning feeling much better; which means the time spent by a GP researching and then trying to contact the patient is a waste, and may be taking away from somebody in real need.

Perhaps the surgery could adjust/highlight the wording on the website so that it becomes blindingly obvious to patients that the Consulting Room is not an invitation to see a clinician at short notice?

- b) A number of PRG members are wondering if the physiotherapy clinic is to be revived at the Healthy Living Centre, and though there is no timescale for this, once the vaccination clinic has been moved to a recently acquired (large) tent, then the physiotherapists will be able to get back into their area. At the moment, some patients are getting treatment at the West Suffolk Hospital and then having to go to Norwich for physiotherapy, which is an unfortunate consequence of living on the border between the two counties of Norfolk and Suffolk.
- c) One member of the group informed the meeting that the pharmacy at the Healthy Living Centre had delivered a vitamin B-12 phial (for injection) to her home on two separate occasions, an item that is not available to order on their repeat prescription. This prescription is requested by the nurse who administers the jab and the paper is then placed in a separate box to the normal paper prescriptions; it is then sent away for payment, but it would appear there has been some cross contamination! The clinical pharmacists will be informed of this issue.

- d) Our chair wished to state for the record that both he and his good lady have had wonderful treatment throughout the whole of the pandemic and they are very grateful to the surgery.

It was also noted that this evening was supposed to be a joint patient group meeting but that no Grove Lane patients had logged on, and that perhaps the online meetings are not such a good idea in that respect; and that perhaps our patient group meetings should primarily be for individual surgeries?

We were told there had been discussion with the Practice Manager and Dr Jon Bryson on this very issue and that they had envisaged a 'big patient group' with Watton also joining us, so a questionnaire was circulated among members in which views were sought. The result of this was another discussion with Grove Lane Surgery where it was decided that in future we will revert to our separate status as individual patient groups, with a biannual get-together to compare notes, plus some collaboration on special events, such as the Nurse of the Year showcase.

- e) This was the last of our last online meetings and our next session will be face-to-face at the surgery, where we will be joined by Dr Jon Bryson, along with Mader Elof, Clinical Pharmacist at the surgery.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday 22nd July, 7 PM at School Lane Surgery