

Minutes of Patient Participation Group meeting held on Thursday, 20 May 2021, at 14:00.

1. Welcome

Due to ongoing access restrictions, this meeting is held virtually via ZOOM, and hosted by the Practice Manager. Louise bids everyone a warm welcome and thanks members for their time and effort to 'attend'.

2. Attending

Staff Louise Upton (Practice Manager)
Lita Tuggey (Operations Assistant)
Clive Upton (Operations Assistant)

Members CH
LH
JF
NH
KA

Apologies Dr Faiza Akif
Mr AA

3. Covid-19 update

Louise starts by reporting to the group that the practice has just about completed 100% of coronavirus vaccinations – first and second – for patients in Groups 1 – 9. These would be all patients aged 16 and over and considered to be vulnerable due to underlying health conditions. These patients have mostly had their vaccinations at the Reading Hub set up by the local Primary Care Network. However, many patients have selected to manage their own vaccinations by booking online and attending at various other locations in the area. Louise also reported that the Reading Hub will perhaps continue to provide the service until mid-July, and all further appointments will be for patients having their 2nd dose, provided the required time has passed since their 1st vaccination.

4. Staff update

Louise shares with the Group that we have had a few staff changes, namely that our practice pharmacist, Punita, is sadly leaving us; we have two new healthcare assistants, Tina and Justyna, and we are interviewing for two new receptionists.

5. Online appointment booking

Clive points out that patients, who have online access, are still unable to book appointments online, as this option is suspended for the duration of the pandemic.

6. Referrals

Mrs Howard raises an enquiry regarding referrals for herself and her husband. Louise agrees to arrange a meeting with Mrs Howard to discuss this matter privately. For information purposes, however, we can explain that referrals to secondary care are managed in various ways, depending on the type of referral, i.e. to NHS services, or to private health services, etc. The practice secretaries manage all areas relating to referrals and can be contacted at any time during practice hours. If they are not in, a message can be left for them to return a call the following day.

7. Locum doctors

There is a question regarding locum doctors, and we wish to confirm that we employ the services of several, regular locum doctors and nurses to support the practice clinicians.

These sessional clinicians are all duly qualified with full access to our systems and all patient information. We understand that continuity of care is important to our patients, and we, therefore, try our best to employ the same sessional clinicians on a regular basis.

8. Telephone consultations for patients with special needs.

Nuala discusses the importance of being aware of the needs of patients with special needs. This is in view of the practice offering telephone consultations in most instances when a patient requests a consultation with a GP. Nuala points out that not all patients are confident to speak on the phone, and become uncomfortable, or even anxious, when being made to speak to 'a stranger' on the phone. Nuala mentions that she works in this area of expertise, and offers to present a training/information session to practice staff, if we think this might help. We agree to take up this kind offer at our forthcoming staff meeting.

9. Outgoing calls/unidentified caller

The problem that our outgoing calls to patients are blocked, i.e. caller cannot be identified, is mentioned. A suggestion is made that we have this changed so that the general number of the practice is presented to patients when we call out, to avoid the calls being ignored. We agree to contact the phone service provider in this regard.

10. Virtual access

Karen comments on the current methods of consultation in the practice, due to the pandemic, and restricted access. This relates to providing telephone consultations, as well as, virtual consultations using Zoom, etc. The suggestion is made to continue these, even after the restricted access to the surgery is lifted, as it provides access to the surgery for patients who are unable to attend in person for various reasons. It is confirmed that these consultations will definitely continue, as will some other methods and processes resulting from the pandemic, and which have proved to be effective and convenient.

11. Feedback

Mrs Howard expresses her gratitude and admiration for the conduct of the administration staff, as well as, the clinical staff throughout the lockdown. Jane, Karen and Nuala all agree, and particularly also mention the pharmacists.

12. Meeting adjourned

After Louise confirms that no-one has anything more to add, she thanks everyone for joining and participating. The meeting is adjourned at 15:00.