

Minutes of PPG Committee Meeting

held on Tuesday, 30th November 2021 via Teams

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Present: Nick Dent (Chair), Peter Maskery (Vice Chair), Tania Hinde, Ian Lambert, Lisa Howels, Anne Rigby, Richard McLeod (Business Partner, Park Medical), Dr Beth Matthews (GP Partner, Park Medical).

Apologies: Carole Brande, **Sandra Rudd, Tansy Stewart.**

2. Discussion on areas of concern arising from the recent survey.

Members had received the minutes of a recent subcommittee meeting which had been set up to analyse the patient survey, highlight the results and areas of concern and to receive feedback from the practice. The following areas were highlighted as areas of concern requiring feedback and possible action:

- a. While the survey clearly identified a preference to a mixed appointment system, there is a real sense of frustration with both the number of pre-bookable, either face to face or telephone appointments and the difficulties in actually making an appointment. What are the plans to improve the current situation and alleviate the anxiety of many patients?**

Richard referred to the national guidelines from NHS England re appointments, stating that appointments are still being triaged according to clinical need, with patient with the most urgent needs being seen by clinicians at the practice. Infection control is still a high priority which means face-to-face appointments are very limited. Demand for medical appointments is still outstripping supply, which is consistent at a national level. The volume and complexity of appointments remains much bigger than it was prior to the pandemic. There has been increased investment in clinical staff including additional training for nursing staff and additional pharmacists.

- b. Making contact with the surgery was included as a common question with the 2019 survey. The results suggest a very significant shift in patient satisfaction. In 2019, 82% of patients were very satisfied or felt the service was excellent, whereas in 2021 this had dropped to only 23%. Conversely the number feeling the service was poor or only satisfactory had risen from just 13% to 62%. This together with the appointment issues raised above has led to an unfortunate sense of dissatisfaction among many patients, which members of the Committee had picked up in conversations. What actions have the Practice taken to date to address these genuine concerns and what plans are in place going forward?**

Richard reported that the level of non-clinical staff has dropped to 55% of previous levels (July 2021). This has largely been due to pressures of work and general fatigue and level of patient demand.

Question from member: Would it be feasible to book appointments for triage thereby alleviating pressure on the telephones? Richard said that more flexibility with the appointments system for the benefit of patients is desirable, and internal thinking will be informed by survey results. The main pressures fall on non-clinical resources, and a lot of work is currently being undertaken to recruit additional non clinical personnel. There is a high level of frustration with the current telephone system which would benefit from an upgrade. The practice made the decision not to participate in the current COVID Vaccination Programme (younger cohorts and boosters). A lot of work is being done on refreshing current systems, though not at the level the practice would like to be.

- c. The Committee believe they could do more to help the Practice particularly in terms of explaining to the patients, what is being done or proposed going forward. The Newsletter provided a means but it would require probably using text messaging to notify people of each new edition. What would the Practice like to see the PPG doing to help with communications?**

Richard acknowledged that the channels of communication between the practice and its patients are less than perfect, which is partly due to the short supply of non-medical resources. It was acknowledged that this was a very important area that needed more attention in the future.

Members felt that the PPG could assist with communication between patients and the practice on the current issues and constraints. This might help patients be more understanding of the issues facing Park Medical and practices across the country, and reduce some of the frustrations felt by patients about telephone and appointment systems. Better patient awareness through more dialogue and communication could help with managing patients' expectations. This could be improved by more information on the practice's website, and more specifically, the PPG page.

The PPG needs to demonstrate its appreciation to patients who completed the survey, in order for it to remain credible and meaningful. The subcommittee is to compile a summary of the survey and its results to acknowledge the efforts made by survey participants.

Richard was asked to provide some information regarding call numbers (level of increase, etc.) in order to generate more understanding and awareness amongst patients.

The Chair and Vice chair agreed to prepare a communication to be forwarded to Richard for inclusion on the PPG page of the Park Medical web site. In addition, it was agreed that new financial arrangements allowed the use of Text messaging to make patients aware of the publication on the web site.

3. Update on changes within the Practice

The practice is about to invest in some additional management capacity including another Operations Manager with a communications brief and IT infrastructure. A care Co-Ordinator is also to be recruited to improve patient communication in terms of campaigns and links between practice staff and patients. This could include regular video updates and text messages.

4. Future PPG meetings:

It was agreed that the meeting had been both informative and productive due to the reduced agenda and planning work undertaken in advance. The Chair suggested that the group could have more targeted meetings in the future, rather than general updates. This meeting had focused on the survey and actions resulting from it, and it was felt that it had achieved a better way forward. Future meetings focusing on a specific issue or topic, such as communication, would be more likely to result in concrete achievements.

5. Any other business:

The Chair and Vice chair would both like to stand down from their positions from next year but would like to remain on the Committee. The PPG will need to start a recruitment campaign to replace them in their posts.

It was agreed that the Chair would organize another planning Committee Meeting in January to prepare a recommendation on how the Committee can assist the Practice in the area of communicating with our fellow patients.

A date for the next full meeting of the Committee needs to be arranged, with most members present favouring a face-to-face meeting, and Richard would be happy for the practice to fund a large enough venue where social distancing can be maintained.

Dates of next meetings to be agreed.

Nick Dent, (with enormous help and assistance from Anne Rigby).