

## Patient Participation Group (PPG) Seminar Notes

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024; Location: Room 2, Huntingdon Library

In attendance:

- Twenty-six PPG members from throughout Cambridgeshire and Peterborough representing fifteen different surgeries.
- Healthwatch staff: Karen Igho; Caroline Tyrell Jones; Paul Gould; Sue Allen
- Chair Stewart Francis and Vice Chair Frances Dewhurst

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## Welcome and Introductions

Opening Remarks

### Welcome Message:

The seminar commenced with a warm welcome from the Chair, Stewart Francis, who expressed appreciation for the attendees' presence and participation. The Chair emphasised the significance of the Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and their essential role in shaping local healthcare services.

## **Purpose of the Seminar:**

The Chair outlined the primary objectives of the seminar:

- To foster collaboration among different PPGs.
- To share best practices and innovative ideas.
- To gather valuable insights and feedback to enhance the effectiveness of PPGs.
- To address current concerns and challenges faced by PPGs.

## **Overview of the Agenda:**

The participants were provided a brief overview of the agenda, highlighting the key sessions and activities planned for the day:

1. Welcome and Introductions: A brief introduction of the seminar's objectives.
2. World Café Session 1: Interactive discussions on the chosen topics which were chosen by PPG members.
3. Networking & Light Refreshments: A break to allow participants to network, share experiences, and enjoy light refreshments.
4. World Café Session 2: Further interactive discussions on the remaining topics.
5. Closing Remarks: A summary of the day's discussions, a thank you to the participants, and an outline of the next steps.

The Chair concluded the opening remarks by encouraging active participation and open dialogue throughout the seminar, emphasising that the event was designed to be an inclusive and collaborative platform for all attendees.

## **World Café Sessions**

### **Topic: What Has Worked for Your PPG**

#### **Key Points Discussed:**

1. Successful Initiatives
  - Can you describe a project or initiative your PPG has undertaken that you consider particularly successful?
  - What were the key factors that contributed to the success of this initiative?
2. Community Engagement
  - How has your PPG successfully engaged with the wider community?

- What methods have you found most effective in gathering patient feedback and involving them in your activities?

### 3. Lessons Learned

- What lessons have you learned from your PPG's past successes and failures?
- How have these lessons shaped your current practices and future plans for the PPG?

### **Summary of discussion points, key insights shared by participants and suggestions and ideas.**

- Kimbolton PPG spoke about how they assisted with COVID-19 and flu vaccinations at the surgery, which helped facilitate more people being seen. Wansford PPG mentioned that their surgery had a drive-by system for patients. It was acknowledged that each surgery has its own needs, which vary depending on the facilities available.
- Kimbolton's PPG organises two presentations per year at their village hall on topics such as diabetes, winter pressures, and mental health. These sessions have recently resumed since COVID-19 and their format includes a speaker and Q&A session. The last session had 60 attendees. It was promoted in the village magazine, on social media, and through word of mouth, with posters strategically placed around the area.
- Little Paxton and Buckden PPG are setting up and facilitating three events:
  - They have facilitated a session helping patients use the NHS app.
  - They are planning to facilitate an "Ask Your GP" session for new parents.
  - They are going to facilitate a "Know Your Numbers" session.
  - The topics were established based on patient feedback.
- Eye and Thorney PPG received 180 responses from a patient feedback survey they created. Although they felt this was a low number, others at the table were impressed, acknowledging that it is notoriously difficult to get survey responses.
- Hicks Group Practices' PPG is running "Listening Tables," a successful initiative that has been ongoing for five months. This event is held on the same day each month at both surgeries. During these sessions, they talk to patients and ask them to complete feedback questionnaires, collecting around 50 each time. The collected data is then fed back to the practice. There are social prescribers present each time who make direct referrals for patients they engage with.

- Charles Hicks surgery has published a book about the practice to raise funds for interactive screens. They are also offering support to other practices interested in undertaking similar initiatives.
- At a resuscitation awareness event attended by GPs, one PPG provided assistance, refreshments, and promoted awareness of their PPG.
- St. Mary's PPG is assisting with waste medicine collections and supporting efforts to reduce missed appointments.
- Acorn Surgery ran pre-COVID seminars titled "Are Your Painkillers Killing Your Pain?" and a resuscitation seminar attended by GPs, which had a full room; however, no feedback was collected. Additionally, a social prescriber gave a Zoom talk on loneliness.
- It was noted that PPG members are struggling to set up PPG email addresses and are having to use personal ones.
- One surgery is implementing a policy where patients can only book appointments in person after 10am, allowing staff to manage the phones more effectively. This change has been positively received.
- It was noted that a successful PPG requires the support of the practice for things to work effectively.
- The importance of social care was discussed.
- Conversations about establishing a PPG forum in the north, similar to the CPCPG group in South Cambs, indicated that such an initiative would be very welcome. It would be beneficial if Healthwatch could help facilitate this.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the discussions highlighted the diverse approaches PPGs have taken to support their respective surgeries, particularly in facilitating COVID-19 and flu vaccinations, and organizing educational events on health-related topics. While the methods and initiatives varied — ranging from drive-by vaccination systems to resuscitation awareness events — the common thread was the dedication to improving patient care and engagement. The success of these efforts often hinges on the level of support from the practices themselves. Feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and "Listening Tables," proved essential in gathering patient insights, despite challenges around response rates. The idea of establishing a PPG forum in the north, akin to the CPCPG group in South Cambs, was met with enthusiasm and could further enhance collaboration and effectiveness, with potential support from Healthwatch being instrumental. Overall, these efforts underscore the vital role of PPGs in bridging the gap between patients and healthcare providers, promoting a more responsive and patient-centred healthcare environment.

## **Topic: Increasing PPG Membership**

### **Key Points Discussed:**

#### 1. Current Strategies

What strategies has your PPG used to attract new members, and how successful have they been?

Can you share any specific events or initiatives that significantly boosted your PPG's membership?

#### 2. Barriers

What barriers have you encountered in trying to increase membership in your PPG?

How have you tried to overcome these barriers, and what have you learned from those efforts?

#### 3. Ideas and Innovations

What new ideas or innovative approaches do you think could help attract more members to your PPG?

How can you engage younger demographics or other underrepresented groups to join your PPG?

### **Summary of discussion points, key insights shared by participants and suggestions and ideas.**

- Information should be provided in different languages to cater to various cultures.
- PPG members should be handpicked by the practice manager.
- PPG members could visit clinics to promote and recruit new members.
- The practice manager should always attend the meetings.
- TV screens in surgeries should be used to recruit PPG members and promote PPG activities. The content on the screens could be displayed in different languages.
- Remember that not everyone uses social media; try more traditional recruitment methods such as putting up posters and using newsletters.
- If the PPG is new, it will need support from the practice and Healthwatch.
- Members tend to be from the retired community, so consider flexible meeting times to recruit younger people and those from different communities.

- Ensure the purpose of the PPG is clear and that it is not just a place to complain.
- It is helpful for a PPG to have a code of practice.
- Target students from sixth form colleges and health and care programs.
- A digital champion could be useful, particularly for redesigning websites and creating social media content. This could be a separate role for someone interested and should be promoted as such.
- Use a community building for meetings and activities.
- Contact young mothers' groups and other known community groups to recruit people.
- Invite speakers to talk and then invite the local population to listen.
- Send an email newsletter to all patients from the PPG.
- Have a hard copy newsletter available in libraries, pharmacies, etc.
- Organize a summer event.
- Hold a pride event to show that everyone from all backgrounds is welcome.
- Healthwatch could have a stand at a practice or event, and a PPG member could attend to recruit for the PPG.
- Create a PPG podcast.
- Minutes should be taken and made public; these can be anonymous but will inform people about what is being discussed.
- Consider incentives for young people and others to join.
- Advertise on school governors' agendas.
- Hold a lunchtime meeting so staff can attend occasionally.
- Find out if students would be allowed to attend during school time.
- Make meetings friendly and accessible to reduce fear.
- Address the barrier that people might think PPG members have all the answers instead of being a voice.
- Overcome the barrier of disinterest by finding ways to catch people's attention.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of PPGs involves a multi-faceted approach. By providing information in multiple languages, leveraging traditional and digital recruitment methods, and ensuring consistent support from practice managers, PPGs can better engage diverse community members. Flexibility in meeting times, targeted outreach to younger and more varied demographics, and the promotion of clear, constructive objectives will help broaden participation. Utilising digital champions, publicising activities through various media, and creating welcoming, accessible environments are crucial. Additionally, addressing potential barriers to engagement and finding innovative ways to capture interest will further strengthen the impact and reach of PPGs.

## **Topic: Surgery Phone Systems**

### **Key Points Discussed:**

#### 1. Efficiency and Accessibility

- How do you feel about the efficiency of your surgery's phone system in handling patient inquiries and appointments?
- What challenges have you encountered when using the surgery's phone system?
- Can you share any specific experiences where the phone system either significantly helped or hindered your interaction with the surgery?

#### 2. Improvements

- What changes or improvements would you suggest for the surgery's phone system to better serve patients?
- How could the phone system be adapted to better accommodate those with disabilities or language barriers?

#### 3. Technology Integration

- How do you think integrating new technologies (e.g., online booking, automated call handling) could enhance the surgery's phone system?
- Are there any specific features or technologies you think should be prioritised in the surgery's phone system?

### **Summary of discussion points, key insights shared by participants and suggestions and ideas.**

- There is a lack of transparency about appointment availability.
- COVID-19 has negatively impacted access to phone systems.

- In some surgeries, callback systems seem to be working well.
- Non-emergency cases are falling through the cracks with the new systems.
- Some practices are resisting online systems and prefer face-to-face appointments.
- There is a need to understand the relationship between GPs and NHS 111.
- Maintaining a choice of how to access appointments is crucial.
- Patient guides, especially for new patients, should be produced on how to access appointments.
- Patients need to be educated about seeing other healthcare professionals besides GPs.
- The system becomes overwhelmed during the 8-8.30 am rush.
- There is a lack of general awareness of the Ask My GP system, which is excellent and should be better promoted.
- Callbacks should be allowed to maintain your place in the queue.
- Elderly populations face challenges accessing online systems.
- The public needs more education on how systems operate. Hybrid systems, offering face-to-face, phone, or online appointments, work well in smaller practices.
- Benchmarking should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of systems.
- Patients would prefer to pre-book non-urgent appointments.
- Medication supply is challenging due to phone system issues.
- Online systems allow patients to see the same GP or request a specific appointment type.
- Many systems have limited capacity.
- Patients should be encouraged to use online booking systems.
- Different forums may be needed for people requiring mental health support.
- Trauma cards should be used.
- All information should be easy to read and accessible.



In conclusion, a well-functioning appointment system should cater to diverse needs. It should offer a choice of access methods (phone, online, in-person) and be transparent about availability. Effective communication and education are crucial to ensure patients understand their options and can navigate the system effectively. Hybrid models that combine online and traditional methods can be particularly beneficial in smaller practices. Streamlining processes, promoting under-utilised services (like Ask My GP), and prioritising accessibility for vulnerable populations are all essential for a patient-centred approach.

## **Topic: Working with Your Integrated Neighbourhood (IN)**

### **Key Points Discussed:**

#### **1. Understanding the IN System**

- How well do you understand the structure and functions of your Integrated Network (IN)?
- What resources or information helped you understand the IN system, and what additional information would be helpful?

#### **2. Sense of Inclusion**

- Do you feel that your PPG is an integral part of the IN system? Why or why not?

#### **3. Improving the Relationship**

- What specific actions or changes do you think could improve the relationship between your PPG and the IN?
- Are there any specific communication or collaboration practices that you believe would strengthen the connection between your PPG and the IN?

### **Summary of discussion points, key insights shared by participants and suggestions and ideas.**

- PPG representatives have a limited understanding of Integrated Neighbourhoods, with many unaware of their existence.
- Conversations between PPGs and Integrated Neighbourhoods are infrequent, and when integrated neighbourhood staff attend PPG meetings, they often fail to improve understanding.
- PPGs need the ability to challenge Integrated Neighbourhoods on the challenges faced by patients using GP practices.
- Patients do not understand the purpose of Integrated Neighbourhoods or their value for money.
- Patients have a poor understanding of the different roles within GP practices, leading to frustration.

- Could Healthwatch facilitate meetings between PPG representatives and Integrated Neighbourhoods?
- It is difficult for patients to contact PPGs or Healthwatch, as communication often goes through practice staff. PPGs could benefit from slides with a map of Integrated Neighbourhoods and contact details.
- Some GP practices and their patients span multiple geographical areas, including different Integrated Neighbourhoods, which complicates healthcare.
- PPG members do not know how to find out when integrated Neighbourhood meetings are taking place.

## **Conclusion**

There is a clear disconnect between PPGs, Integrated Neighbourhoods, and patients. Improved communication and collaboration are essential to enhance understanding of each other's roles and challenges. Increased transparency about integrated neighbourhoods and their functions is needed to build trust and confidence among patients. Facilitating direct engagement between PPGs and Integrated Neighbourhoods is crucial to address patient concerns effectively.

## **Additional Thoughts from Participants**

- Are there any guidelines for PPGs raising funds that outline what is appropriate?
- PPGs have successfully raised funds for various items, including BP machines, bariatric chairs, and technical equipment.
- Many practices find their practice manager to be very supportive, with managers often attending PPG meetings.
- One PPG mentioned they are in the process of rebuilding after COVID-19 and the loss of a member.
- Several PPG members highlighted the usefulness of video calls, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- One PPG raised funds by selling books and hosting a gala.

## **Overall Summary**

### **Key Challenges and Opportunities**

The discussions highlighted several key challenges faced by PPGs:

- Understanding of systems: Difficulty understanding the complexities of the NHS, including Integrated Neighbourhoods and GP practice operations.
- Patient engagement: Challenges in recruiting and retaining PPG members, particularly from diverse communities.

- Communication: Ineffective communication between PPGs, practices, Integrated Neighbourhoods, and patients.
- System efficiency: Issues with phone systems, appointment booking, and overall access to care.

Despite these challenges, PPGs have demonstrated a strong commitment to improving patient care through various initiatives, such as patient surveys, educational events, and collaborative projects.

## **Recommendations**

To address these challenges and build upon successes, the following recommendations emerged:

- Enhanced collaboration: Strengthen partnerships between PPGs, practices, and Integrated Neighbourhoods.
- Improved communication: Develop effective channels for sharing information and feedback between stakeholders.
- Patient engagement: Employ innovative strategies to recruit and involve patients from diverse backgrounds.
- System optimisation: Advocate for improvements in phone systems, appointment booking, and overall patient experience.
- Knowledge sharing: Create opportunities for PPGs to share best practices and learn from each other.

By implementing these recommendations, PPGs can become more effective in representing patient needs and driving positive change within the healthcare system.

## **Networking Session Overview**

The networking session provided a valuable opportunity for PPG representatives to connect, share experiences, and build relationships. Attendees engaged in open and constructive dialogue about the challenges and successes encountered in their respective roles.

The event fostered a collaborative atmosphere where best practices were shared and innovative approaches to patient engagement were discussed. PPG members were able to identify common challenges and explore potential solutions together.

To further strengthen the network and support collaborative working, the chair proposed the formation of a North Primary Care Patient Group, similar to the existing South Cambs model.

## **Closing Remarks**

Vice Chair: Francis Dewhurst

### **Summary of Closing Remarks**

The Vice Chair concluded the session by summarising the day's discussions. She highlighted the value of the shared experiences and insights, emphasising the collaborative spirit among attendees. Gratitude was expressed to all participants for their contributions.

Looking ahead, the Vice Chair outlined the next steps, including exploring the possibility of forming a North Primary Care Patient Group.

**Prepared by: Karen Igho**

**Date: July 2024**