

PPG Meeting

Monday 29th February 2016, 6pm St Thomas Health Centre

Present: Mrs Gill Heppell
Dr Alice Godwin
Dr Mark Watson
Mrs Dawn Hogbin
Mrs Marion Long
+ 14 members of our PPG

Apologies: Dr J Fox
+ 7 members of our PPG

WELCOME

Gill welcomed and thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

Gill gave a brief history of our PPG explaining how in 2011 the Government encouraged each Practice to develop a properly constituted structure that both reflects and gains the views of its registered patients and enables the practice to obtain feedback from a cross-section of the practice population which is as representative as possible.

St Thomas PPG had to-date been guided by the Health Centre which is perhaps not the true objective of a PPG?

At one of our PPG meetings our members were asked and encouraged to become an independent PPG and an evening meeting was set up. Mrs Liz Cosford from the Patients Association was invited to attend and help with setting up an independent group.

Following all of this a few of our PPG members expressed an initial interest in setting up and running this independent group.

New CORE GROUP - Introduction

Mr Michael Morgan and Mrs Amanda Ford introduced themselves and explained where we were at present with the Core Group.

Michael informed us that he moved into the area about 4 years ago and found the Health Centre to be very friendly, which was nice to hear.

Michael reported that in the past he and Mrs Eileen Barber had attended a sub-locality meeting at Westbank with about 15 other Practices and they soon realised that our PPG was very "Practice" led compared to the other PPGs.

He also reported that following their attendance at the Westbank Meeting there didn't seem to be anywhere to feedback their findings back into. Also it appeared that the other PPGs were working harder than us?

Michael felt that small groups had more power and that the Practice is exciting and this should be fed back.

Mrs Amanda Ford then explained that she and Eileen had spent an enjoyable morning in the Health Centre on Monday 15th February. Their purpose was to try and promote the PPG and recruit new members, trying to specifically target the younger patients. They also reported they had both enjoyed themselves!

A St Thomas Health Centre PPG Facebook page has been set up which had already attracted 50 members. This was very encouraging.

The feedback obtained from their morning in the Health Centre was both positive and negative.

A board with “*what we did well*” and “*what we do badly*” will be set up with the feedback received. **ML to action**

One of the “*negatives*” received was about the signage directing patients to the upstairs reception.

It was found that some patients were not aware that they did not have to queue downstairs to check themselves in when they have a GP appointment, they could just go upstairs and check in at the upstairs reception.

Whilst there is a sign in the main foyer directly patients upstairs, it is quite small and not very noticeable. New signage is to be investigated. **ML confirmed we are currently investigating new signage and a price has been sought for this.**

NEW APPOINTMENT SYSTEM

Gill explained that the NHS, and general practice in particular, will face extreme challenges in the next 10 years and the provision of care will need to be rationalised.

Some current services may no longer be available. Gill had heard that day that Devon County Council could no longer afford to commission Health Checks from primary care and this popular service would no longer be offered to our patients. The public will need to be educated regarding the rationalisation of resources.

Gill also reported that the Partnership is facing a 15% cut in its budget from April of this year. This reduction in funding is the main reason we have had to close the Same Day Illness Clinic. This Clinic has been funded by the Partners out of the profits of the Practice. However, Dr Mark Watson reported that as income was dropping, but our costs etc keep rising and therefore profits are down, the funding for this Clinic could not be sustained.

Alongside the financial challenges facing the Practice, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new GPs. This is a national problem. Medical needs are increasing. It is a well-documented fact that 20% of patients (mainly the elderly and those with chronic illnesses) take up 80% of our resources and this figure is increasing. We are also offering a lot more screening in order to prevent illnesses in the future.

Demand has now outstripped availability. This is one of the reasons the GPs are now triaging appointments, so that those with the most need get the most appropriate and timely appointment.

Dr Mark Watson admitted that telephone triage is difficult but necessary in order that appointments are not just allocated on a “first come first served” basis, as they have been under the old system.

We are under extreme pressure!

Dr Alice Godwin stated that this new system was not “*set in stone*” and we are continually tweaking the system and always making changes. We do know that we need to be flexible.

One of our PPG members mentioned the difficulty when you see your GP and your GP asks you to make an appointment in two weeks’ time but there are no available appointments.

Dr Godwin will feed this back to the Partners and it may be that the GP gives a slip for the patient to take to Reception for an appointment to be released.

Gill explained that one possible idea to help with the appointment situation would be for the “personal list” system to be abolished, whereby patients only see their allocated GP if they are available. Under a “practice list” system patients would see any GP that was available.

This was not favoured at the moment by the patients at the meeting, or the GPs, as continuity was favoured, where possible.

One PPG member explained that this was not an issue at Exwick with getting an appointment, but Gill explained that the Practice population at both sites was completely different with St Thomas having far more elderly patients who needed to be seen far more often than at Exwick.

One Group member asked whether it would be possible for Nurses to do the telephone triage.

Dr Mark Watson explained that it takes approximately 10 years to train a GP and even with this background it can be difficult to make a diagnosis on the telephone. A Nurse could do this job but would probably want specific training before feeling confident to deal with the uncertainty of a telephone consultation.

Access to On-Line Services which will include access to your Medical Records

From 1.4.16 there will be a nationally driven campaign to give patients access to their medical records. This will be run alongside patients being able to directly book their own appointments as well as ordering their repeat medication.

Gill explained this was a huge piece of work because the GPs will have to ensure, as far as possible, that the medical records are accurate and contain no third party information.

At the present time we have approximately 6500 patients signed up to our website to order prescriptions and request appointments. It is anticipated that these patients will all sign up for the new system from the offset!

Gill explained that you do not need to re-register at the Health Centre but you will need to complete a **registration form** for **On-Line Services** – these can be downloaded from the website or picked up from the Health Centre.

GENERAL

It was highlighted that our telephone message was far too long when patients ring in. Marion Long stated that we were aware of this and looking into it. ML

One idea is to type up slips with the telephone “by pass options” to give to patients, which should help speed up this process?

Gill asked if there was any topic that our Group would like to hold a meeting about, following the success of the Dementia evening.

One group member said that his son would be able to deliver a talk on Child Protection.

The feedback was very positive both from our PPG and the GPs and staff in attendance. The PPG members felt it was important to hear the views of the GPs.

One or two members in attendance expressed an interest in joining the Core Group and Marion would make contact with these members to confirm their interest and ask if it would be OK to pass their names/email address to our Core Group.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Date of the next PPG meeting is to be decided but will probably be June/July.