

Patient Participation Group Minutes



↓ Meeting Details

Location: The Grange Medical Centre

Facilitators: Megan Turner & Stephanie Shepherd

Date: Friday 12th January 2024

Time: 10am-11am

Attendees: 7 patients from across Colton Mill Medical Centre, Manston Surgery, Ashfield Medical Centre and The Family Doctors

↓ Introduction

Cross Gates Primary Care Network (PCN) is a collaborative group of local healthcare practices; Colton Mill Medical Centre, Manston Surgery, Ashfield Medical Centre, and The Family Doctors. We work together to provide comprehensive and accessible primary care services to the community. As the Care Coordinator, I, Megan Turner along with Stephanie Shepherd, the PCN Manager, extended a warm welcome to our first Patient Participation Group (PPG) meeting. We were delighted to witness strong patient interest, with 305 patients from Colton Mill Medical Centre, 237 from Manston Surgery, 79 from The Family Doctors and 270 from Ashfield Medical Centre - showing a collective commitment to enhancing healthcare services. Our first face-to-face meeting, 7 patients attended from across the practices. This PPG marks a crucial step in our journey to improve access and capacity. This meeting structure facilitated open discussions and valuable insights around different ways patients can access their surgery and feedback on how we can improve.

Topic: Access Barriers for Diverse Patient Groups

- A segment of our patient populations encounters difficulties accessing services, due to various factors such as technological limitations, advanced age, lack of internet access and sensory impairments.

Suggestions:

- Implementation on a volunteer-driven initiative to reach out to patients confronting challenges in accessing healthcare and utilising IT resources. This dedicated contact would aim to understand their specific needs, ensuring they receive adequate support, and exploring additional measures to further assist them.

Response:

- A valuable idea that aligns with our commitment to enhancing patient support. We will explore the practicalities of implementing such a volunteer-driven initiative, considering logistics, training, and coordination.

Topic: Overwhelming information

- Some patients find the healthcare system complex and overwhelming, attributing it to a lack of communication regarding services and changes.

Suggestions:

- Patients suggested having updates and crucial information displayed on reception screens. They also requested clearer communication about the availability of extended access services through various channels such as posters, leaflets, workshops, texts, and emails to enhance awareness and accessibility.

Response:

- Having information on reception screens is definitely something that we can look into doing and think it would be useful for the patients who come in practice but maybe don't have access to websites or social media. With regards to clearer communication, we will create some materials that can be handed out to patients and we are currently in the process of organising an Educational Workshop to explain these services and what is available in more detail.

Topic: Difficulty in Online Appointment Booking (Manston Surgery and Family Drs)

- Patients from Manston Surgery and The Family Doctors express frustration with the inability to book appointments online, relying heavily on phone-based booking.

Suggestions:

- Easier access to booking appointments online for these two practices, looking into why it currently isn't possible. More education around what you can and can't do on the online system.

Response:

- We will speak to each Practice Manager at each surgery and get detailed information on what is possible to do online and look into the possibility of booking appointments online for all practices.

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Topic: Phone Accessibility Challenges

- Most patients raised concerns regarding difficulties in reaching the practice by phone, experiencing prolonged wait times without clear information about their position in the queue.

Suggestions:

- Some patients suggest enhancing the phone system to alleviate wait times, proposing the implementation of a queuing system to provide transparency on wait durations. Additionally another patient recommended for a call-back system to avoid prolonged waits on hold.

Response:

- All useful suggestions to try and improve the phone system. Currently we are exploring implementation of a queuing system. The idea of a call-back system is noted, and we will discuss its feasibility with each practice, considering their individual phone systems and capabilities.

Topic: Confusion Around Patches Online Consultations

- There is notable confusion surrounding PATCHs and what it can be used for and how to use the system. One patient expressed frustration with the repetition of certain questions on PATCHs, finding them irrelevant during each interaction.

Suggestions:

- Patients think we need to provide clearer guidance and explanations within PATCHs to alleviate confusion.

Response:

- To address the above, we explained to patients that we are currently in the process of conducting educational workshops initially for the older generation to guide patients on using PATCHs effectively. Additionally, we are implementing informative posters in practices and on practice websites. Furthermore, the recent introduction of AI on PATCHs aims to enhance the relevance of questions for a more streamlined user experience.

Topic: Appointment Wait Times

- Expressing concern about extended wait times for appointments, especially in urgent situations. Additionally, highlighting the need for more education about various healthcare professionals and when to see their assistance, as current trends may contribute to extended GP appointment wait times.

Suggestions:

- Recommendation for receptions to receive more training to ask targeted questions for accurate appointment bookings. They also suggest implementing a triaging system, similar to Ashfields use of PATCHs, to prioritise appointments based on urgency. Additionally, patients propose providing more information on the expertise of each healthcare professional to assist patients in making appropriate choices.

Response:

- We plan to organise targeted training sessions for receptionists to enhance their skills in asking the right questions for accurate appointments. Regarding the triaging system, we can explore the feasibility for each practice. We are also working on a comprehensive leaflet highlighting every healthcare professional's role within the PCN, ensuring patients have clear information about the available services beyond GP appointments.

↓ Positive feedback

Positive feedback emerged from the meeting, with one patient acknowledging the improvement at Manston Surgery over the past year. Others shared positive experiences with Family Doctors, highlighted the convenience of online booking at Colton Mill Medical Centre and commending the ease of ordering repeat prescriptions at Ashfield Medical Centre. Some attendees had also utilised Saturday appointments and found them highly convenient.

↓ Next steps

The PPG meeting provided valuable insights and feedback from our patients. We appreciate the positive experiences shared and acknowledge the concerns raised. As a next step, we plan to go through each suggestions and hopefully by the next PPG meeting some of these will have been implemented. We are now hosting our first Education Workshop on the 23/02/24 and started working on the leaflet highlighting the healthcare professionals available to you. We aim to maintain an ongoing dialogue within our PPG, so will be in touch with the details of the next one soon.