

Hanscombe House Patients' Voice Group

Annual Report for 2022 and review of 2020-2021

This report covers activities in 2022 and the previous two years, during the Covid pandemic, when no Annual Meetings were held.

Welcome to Hanscombe House Patients' Voice Group (PVG) Annual Report. It explains who we are and what we have been doing.

Patient groups, originally often called Patient Participation Groups (PPGs), are encouraged in GP practices as a way of providing feedback to Practice staff on the services patients receive. They also act as 'critical friends' to support the Practices by offering constructive suggestions on patient friendly ways of working.

According to The Patients' Association www.patients-association.org.uk, patient groups are generally made up of a group of volunteer patients, the Practice Manager and one or more of the GPs from the practice. They meet on a regular basis to discuss the services on offer, and how improvements can be made for the benefit of patients and the practice.

Since the start of the Covid pandemic we have been meeting mostly via zoom but are hoping that 2023 will bring more face-to-face contact with a wider group of Hanscombe House patients.

People

Between six to eight members have met regularly via zoom, but some who attended prior to the pandemic decided not to continue. Four new members have been recruited during this period. Veronica Fraser was replaced by Maryrose Brennan as Chair in 2019 and returned as Acting Chair in early 2020. Kristina Lawson became Acting Chair in October 2022 when Veronica Fraser stepped down after many years of dedicated and proactive service to the group.

Our meetings benefit greatly from input from Hanscombe House doctors and staff and we have been pleased to welcome the involvement of Dr Anita Oates and Practice representatives Anna Noone, Sally Freeman, Alison Anderson and Clair Ball.

We are pleased to be able to report that the short PVG Patient Survey in early 2023 has already generated new interest in the group and we are expecting some new members to be recruited in time for the forthcoming AGM.

Meetings

There are normally between four and six meetings per year. We held five meetings in 2022, the first three via zoom. The meeting in October at Hanscombe House was the first full meeting held face-to-face since the start of the Covid pandemic in early 2020. In the previous two years all meetings were held via zoom, four in 2020 and six in 2021.

There was an Annual General Meeting on 26th November 2019 held at The Secret Garden Café in Bengoe. The meeting was well attended and enjoyed by all participants.

Topics discussed

Hanscombe House Surgery has provided regular Practice Reports to the patient group meetings. One issue of significant concern has been the increase in the number of

patients registered at the surgery. This has risen by almost 7% from 11,500 at the beginning of 2020 to 12,300 at the end of 2022, partly as a result of the closure of Ware Road Surgery, in spring 2020, as well as additional patients moving into the area, particularly into new homes.

As a patient group we know that the GPs and specialist staff continue to do all they can to offer appointments and other appropriate services. The 'Extended Access' service, based at Hanscombe House since 2019, covered the population of the whole Primary Care Network (PCN) area and was available at specific hours 7 days a week. Patient Group members from Hertford and Ware surgeries attended a meeting in June 2022 to provide feedback on the service, but the new national contract for 'Enhanced Access', which began in October 2022, no longer provides a service on Sundays.

The results from the Integrated Care Board GP Patient Survey were generally positive, considering the increasing demands on GP services, and can be viewed on the website www.hanscombehousesurgery.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/chart-with-percentages.pdf.

In the past year the Patient Group has discussed what the Practice can do about patients who do not turn up for appointments – known as 'Did Not Attends'. This is an important issue because GP and Practice staff time is scarce and should be used for patients who most need it. Hanscombe House produced a 'Did Not Attend' policy and asked the Patient Group for comments. The first edition of the policy was made available on the Practice website and is in the process of revision.

Proposals for revised 'Terms of Reference' and the way forward for the group were considered by the past and present acting chairs and representatives from the practice in September 2022. The new document was approved by the end of the year. This will be necessary to fulfil the new GP contractual requirement to have an active patient group, and with the aim of meeting the Gold Standard. At the same time, the decision was taken to change the name to Patients' Voice Group and to enable all Hanscombe House patients aged 16+ to be automatic members of the Virtual Patients' Voice Group and eligible to receive any news items via text message.

Collaboration with other groups

In July 2022 there were some very big changes to the way local NHS services are planned and organised. The Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) were replaced by Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Hertford now comes under the Herts and West Essex ICB. This has changed the communication channels that we have with the NHS management. Until now we have had wide representation on local health groups, including the Primary Care Network (PCN), Healthwatch, CCG Patient Network Quality and Patient Locality/Liaison Network (PLN).

Under ICBs it is expected that health and care services will work more closely together to offer better health and wellbeing care to patients. Our hope is that new communication routes will develop and patients will be able to effectively contribute to the work of the ICB. Through Linda Pryor (New River Health Practice, Hertford) we already have good connections across the Primary Care Network.

Two members work with representatives of the other local patient groups, within the 'Hertford Heads' group which shares information and campaigns on issues that are in common with, and wider than, those at individual practices, such as parking charges at

Hertford County Hospital and the Cancel out Cancer (CoC) Campaign. CoC awareness sessions will continue in 2023, many face to face. We have also asked questions about allocation of Section 106 (planning gain) monies for healthcare.

We are now working on plans for a Health Fair, later in 2023, together with other Practices in Hertford and Ware.

Communication with patients

During 2020 and 2021 we followed the progress of the Covid pandemic and how patient services were being affected. We produced ten newsletters and Covid vaccination updates between April 2020 and November 2021, which were published on the website www.hanscombehousesurgery.nhs.uk, and social media was used to alert patients to changes in GP services and the NHS Covid Vaccine Programme.

The Practice agreed in principle to a Hanscombe House Facebook group being established along similar lines to the Knebworth and Marymead Practice. This has not yet been implemented, largely due to changes in personnel in the patient group.

Revitalising Patient Groups

Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) is working with the Patients' Association to provide resources and develop 'best practice' for developing new or existing patient groups. This has included a series of webinar workshops which can now be viewed on the PA website: www.patients-association.org.uk/patient-participation-groups.

With these ideas in mind, we will also continue membership of the National Association for Patient Participation (NAPP) <https://napp.org.uk>, which provides useful resources for patient groups and campaigns for more resources for General Practice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Dr Anita Oates, the Practice staff and all the patient representatives who have given their time to the group, particularly during the difficult Covid months. Special thanks are due to Sally Freeman who has kept the group running throughout many personnel changes and to Veronica Fraser who has stepped down after supporting the group for many years.

Kristina Lawson

Acting Chair, Hanscombe House Patients' Voice Group

March 2023