

NOVUM HEALTH PARTNERSHIP  
BARING ROAD BRANCH PATIENTS' GROUP

Meeting: 18 April 2019  
Baring Road Medical Centre: 4.00 p.m.

Present: Bob Blunden (chair), Pat Blunden, Paul Howell, Robert Thompson (RT, minute taker), Janet Thompson, Suzy Wilkinson, Chris Blake, David Williams, Lee Walker

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Marsia Stewart (MS, NHP), Gill Lewis, Patrick Connolly and Jan Gimble.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, circulated previously by email, were accepted.

3. Matters arising

Matters arising concerning public health initiatives, advice on diet etc. are addressed in item 5 below.

4. 'Christmas' lunch

On behalf of the group, the chair thanked Dr Arora and her staff for the excellent lunch we enjoyed on 12 March.

5 (a). Presentation by Lakhvinder Matharu (Lewisham Health and Social Care)

The group was pleased to welcome Lakhvinder, who spoke primarily on Lewisham Council's response to obesity. The council has established the Lewisham Obesity Alliance, with about 100 current stakeholders including schools, community organisations and catering establishments; a 'whole systems' approach has been adopted, taking account of a range of factors such as transport and diet and of a number of possible channels for delivering solutions, including schools, pre-school providers, and public parks.

The 'Sugar Smart Lewisham' campaign seeks to reduce the amount of sugar provided in some contexts, such as school meals, and in other contexts aims both to increase the choice available and to improve public awareness of the sugar content of food and drink. As a result, the borough's school meals provider has undertaken to reduce sugar content by 20% over 12 months; individual schools have pledged to provide information and to supply only water rather than sweetened drinks; catering outlets have been asked to take simple measures such as using salt cellars with fewer holes; and dentists have agreed to display information posters. The public generally have been asked to recruit more organisations to support the campaign, using a standard letter.

The council also seeks to persuade national government to introduce legislation restricting the promotion of junk food on online gaming platforms and television or through special offers at shops and restaurants. Residents are invited to add their names to a petition which the Young Mayor, with other Young Mayors, is shortly to take to Downing Street.

Many Lewisham schools are also involved in the 'Daily Mile' initiative, in which pupils are encouraged to walk or run for 15 minutes on several days of the week. Most of the schools involved so far are primaries, though it is hoped that interest will carry through into secondary schools. Participation is voluntary, however, and depends on school management's priorities as well as parental support.

Lakhvinder also mentioned the Healthy Start programme, mainly for parents and expectant mothers on certain state benefits: those eligible can obtain vouchers to be exchanged for fruit, vegetables, milk and vitamins. Many eligible people, however, do not claim the vouchers: reasons possibly include a stigma attached to 'free' vouchers, the need to fill in a complex form to be signed by a health professional, and some administrative problems in the Universal Credit system.

A separate, less restricted, Lewisham scheme provides free vitamin D supplements for mothers and young children, available at children's centres and many pharmacies. The reason the council and CCG are supplying them is that vitamin D deficiency is becoming more common, partly perhaps because of an over-cautious attitude to sunlight.

More generally, Early Years providers are being encouraged to sign up to the Mayor of London's Healthy Early Years Award scheme, which sets internationally-agreed criteria for nutrition, activity and rest.

#### 5 (b). Discussion

The group felt that all of these initiatives could and should be supported: we can at least help by making publicity material available on the Patients' Group table in the waiting room.

Various specific questions were discussed:

- i. Has the tax on high sugar drinks had any effect?  
In Lewisham the impact of the sugar tax is not yet clear.
- ii. What has been the effect of government financial cutbacks?  
Lewisham's Health and Wellbeing department has suffered a £800,000 cut in this year alone: the effect is to reduce the number of staff employed and to share out the work amongst those remaining, with an inevitable impact on services. Nevertheless, so far the programmes appear to have been successful: there has been a 5% reduction in reception-year obesity; breastfeeding rates are higher than elsewhere; and the council has been able to provide good general parenting advice, including advice on the

transition to solid food. Figures have to be treated with caution, however, because of the transient population of our area.

- iii. Are these initiatives aimed only at the very young and, if so, why?  
Resources are obviously limited, and are best aimed at young children whose bones are developing. Older people with a high BMI can nevertheless be referred to Weightwatchers or a gym, though unfortunately such initial contacts are often not followed up.
- iv. Should vaccinations be compulsory?  
Lewisham does have a lead officer on this issue, though it is national rather than local. The group's feeling is that refusing childhood vaccinations is both irresponsible and antisocial.
- v. Is it likely that more school sports fields will be sold off?  
The question is impossible to answer, though we hope not, as the public health impact is so negative.
- vi. Where does the funding for social prescribing come from and how is it accessed?  
These funds are probably distributed by area and practices would have to bid for them; we should refer to Frances Fuller at Lewisham Health and Wellbeing for an authoritative answer.
- vii. What should we therefore undertake to do as outcomes of this meeting?
  - Pursue social prescribing funding
  - Circulate Sugar Smart recruitment letters and other information.

Chris Blake kindly agreed that posters and other materials could be sent to him at the Ringway Centre. Sugar Smart recruitment responses can be completed online or sent by post to Health and Wellbeing, Floor 3, Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, Lewisham SE6 4RU.

The group extended its thanks to Lakhvinder for her comprehensive and extremely interesting presentation.

## 6. Surgery report

We were disappointed that the surgery report we had expected from MS was not available, but will be sent over the bank holiday weekend.

We had, however, been informed that two GPs are leaving the practice: there was some discussion of the possible reasons for an apparently high GP turnover, which might include working at different sites. It was suggested that their reasons for leaving could reasonably be shared with the Patients' Group.

7. AoB

- i. It was reported that blood tests are no longer available at Marvels Lane. The group would like information on the possible impact of this change on our practice.
- ii. More than one member of the group commented on unacceptably long waits for nurse appointments at Baring Road.
- iii. It was noted that some of the PG information on the practice website is still out of date: RT will mention this when emailing the minutes.
- iv. The Chair asked for someone to step forward as vice-Chair, in case he is unavailable for future meetings. Lee Walker kindly volunteered, and was thanked by the Chair and the rest of the group.

The meeting was declared closed at 5.05. Next meeting **Thursday 6 June at 4.00 p.m.**

**Note that this date has been altered to 13 June.**