

**NOVUM HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
BARING ROAD BRANCH PATIENTS' GROUP**

**Online Meeting: 17 December 2020
6.00 p.m.**

MINUTES

Present: Lee Walker (LW, chair), Robert Thompson (minute taker), Janet Thompson, Patrick Connolly (PC), Paul Howell (PH), Anthony Atherton (AA), Jan Gimble, Elaine Curley, Suzy Wilkinson (from 6.30), Dr Judy Chen (Novum)

1. Before beginning formal business, LW outlined the etiquette for conducting online meetings in terms of waiting for cues to speak, minimising background noise, muting devices when not speaking and so on.
2. LW then welcomed and introduced everyone who had signed in to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Bob Blunden, Pat Blunden, Mythily Mahatharan, Seyhan Yusuf (SY) and Jeanne Mynett.
3. The minutes of the meeting on 19 November were accepted as an accurate record.
4. Matters arising not covered later in the agenda.

There was one matter arising: online access by patients to their own records. This was taken under AoB, due to some temporary technical problems.

5. Practice report

Dr Chen presented the practice report previously circulated by email, expanding on the following specific points:

- i. Two new Physician Associates have been appointed, and one already employed is to be replaced when she leaves in January. The PAs will take on a considerable amount of continuing care work in residential homes.
- ii. A post-qualification GP trainee is also working with the practice until April 2021.
- iii. The Covid-19 vaccination programme has started, though there is some concern that only 40% of the over-80s offered the inoculation have accepted it. This is thought to be due to negative coverage in the popular press, which has also affected the uptake of other vaccination programmes including those for children. The vaccination has been offered to NHS staff; Dr Chen said she found it less uncomfortable than the flu jab and felt no significant side-effects.

6. Survey results

Dr Chen presented a comparative analysis of the NHS GP survey taken in January–April 2020 and the practice's own survey of July–September.

In both surveys, the ethnic balance of respondents does not reflect the patient population: this disproportion is not unusual in surveys, but in future specific targeting might be needed to make sure the concerns of all groups are being met.

In many areas, the two surveys reflected positive responses at least in line with the CCG and national averages. This was especially true of responses to questions about the care offered by GPs and other staff and the overall experience of making an appointment. Dr Chen felt that these were especially good results in view of the disadvantaged population served by the practice. However, there are clearly continuing problems with telephone access and ongoing dissatisfaction with the website.

In the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out that the number of responses recorded in the national survey is not the same as that given in the analysis. Dr Chen accepted that a mistake must have been made, but pointed out that in either case the number was too small to be representative; this was the reason the practice had devised a survey of its own. Taken together, however, the surveys show that improving phone access should be a priority, though it is not obvious how this can be done.

LW suggested that the service might have improved considerably after the special arrangements imposed during the lockdown. AA provided evidence that this is not always the case; it was suggested that either the Baring Road or Rushey Green numbers give access to the appointment system, so patients experiencing problems with one might perhaps try the other.

LW raised the question of patients' mental health needs, which had been reported as an area of dissatisfaction in the national survey. Dr Chen replied that this particular statistic had been based on a very small sample and did not reflect her and her colleagues' actual experience. There was also some discussion of patients' access to specific GPs: it was generally felt that while patients do not expect to speak to a particular doctor whenever they telephone, they would prefer to be able to arrange appointments with a named GP more easily than the surveys suggest they can.

The meeting agreed by a show of hands that its recommended priorities would be telephone access and the website. Dr Chen agreed that the Baring Road phone setup could be upgraded, though factors such as staff turnover (and subsequent retraining) will inevitably affect performance.

7. AoB.

i. AA reported that he is still unable to access his records or obtain repeat prescriptions through Patient Access, despite taking steps such as visiting the practice in person to close and re-open his account. Promises about help and support have not been kept; responses to his enquiries have been unsatisfactory, including one which stated that the practice had no knowledge of his problems.

It was accepted that individual situations of this kind, though not in themselves matters for the Patients' Group, reflect general concerns. PH pointed out that accessibility of records has been discussed before;¹ he also noted that the Patients' Group area of the

¹ 27 July 2020 item 5.v; 19 November 2020 item 5.

practice website is still out of date and does not include the majority of recent minutes. Dr Chen said that she would ask SY to look into both the individual and the wider issue.

ii. PH asked whether the practice has now received information about the availability of extra vaccinators for the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Dr Chen explained that the practice is working within its Primary Care Network: each individual practice has been asked to provide a number of staff, including extra vaccinators who have been recruited and are being trained.

iii. Dr Chen suggested that an audit of the practice's cancer diagnoses, which has recently been conducted by one of her colleagues, would be a good subject for a future meeting. Her proposal was welcomed, and will be scheduled for the March meeting as a speaker has already been arranged for January.

iv. PC asked whether past proposals for a zebra crossing outside or near the Baring Road centre were still current – the answer is unknown.

The meeting was declared closed at 7.00 p.m.

Next meetings: Thursdays 28 January 2021 (AGM), 11 March 2021, both online at 6.00 p.m.