

## **BLOFIELD SURGERY PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

### **Draft Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 at 2.30 pm at the Surgery**

The meeting followed a “farewell lunch” arranged to thank Katie Doughty for all her expertise as the practice manager with the surgery for several years. She has relocated to a post nearer her home. All agreed it was very kind of her and the surgery team to invite PPG members to this event. All wish her well in the future.

**Present:** Gill Henry, Locum Practice Manager, Dr P Cronin and Chelsea Ward, Dispensary Manager.  
**PPG members:** Ivan Block, Peter Bucknall, Golda Conneely, Ruth Gaskin, Jane Hancy, Susan Rowe, Stella Shackle, Len Thurston and Mike Wilcock.

**Apologies for absence** had been received from Pat Budd, Brian Hendrey, Roger Sandall and Arthur Wiffen.

**1) Welcome and introductions:** Gill H welcomed all to the meeting and all introduced themselves.

**2) Minutes of the last meeting** held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 had been circulated and were available at the meeting. They were agreed an accurate account of that meeting.

**3) Matters Arising therefrom:**

a) **Soundproofing:** no progress has yet been made on this issue.

**4) Surgery statistics – patient numbers, DNA figures, no’s of complaints and compliments**

**Patient numbers:** Gill H reported that the patient list size had risen by 29 since our last meeting and currently stood at 8,766.

**DNAs for clinical appointments:** 113 in February and 129 in March. The practice team will continue to monitor the numbers.

**Complaints and compliments:** there had been 3 internal complaints including concerns about care for a patient, prescribing issues and general communication. Complaints will continue to be monitored to identify if there might be a pattern. There had been 1 compliment.

**5) Update – Staff at the surgery and practice recruitment.**

**Practice management:** GH confirmed the resignation of Katie D as practice manager and the surgery’s decision to review the staffing structure to “future proof” the surgery’s financial and service provision as far as possible. They had therefore decided to recruit a Business Manager who would be tasked with “utilising the new room space by growing and inviting new services that will increase the clinical offer to patients.” The Practice Manager post will also be advertised to ensure the day to day running of the practice continues to a high standard.

**Dispensary team:** Chelsea W confirmed that in view of current and impending maternity leave and long term sickness within the team, recruitment to help maintain staffing levels had been undertaken. Unfortunately some new staff had decided not to stay so further recruitment had been necessary. Currently a new dispenser has been recruited, plus a receptionist/ administrator. Temporary maternity leave cover has also been arranged. The team was aware that a change in prescription requests had caused concerns and irritations for patients and requested PPG support in explaining the staffing difficulties being experienced.

**6) What is the Partners’ vision for the surgery?** Peter Bucknall outlined comments he had received from patients, mainly about the resignations of long-term GP partners, the use of the new building and delays in gaining clinical appointments. He wondered whether the partnership could provide a vision for the future that would help patients better understand the situation.

Dr Cronin reviewed the practice's position, initially outlining his experiences in hospitals and as a locum GP in several practices. He had opted to join this practice as he knew that it had a good clinical reputation and he liked to patient-focussed approach of the team. He explained some of the difficulties that practices face when trying to plan ahead, including the increase in patient demand and revised NHS GP contracts. Although several GPs had retired/resigned, he confirmed that newly recruited doctors offered the same number of consulting hours as previously, and extra clinical support had also been recruited. The practice had been contracted to offer "enhanced access" so that patients could be seen outside of normal consulting hours.

The practice decision to appoint a Business Manager, ideally someone with expertise in financial and business management, indicated their wish to ensure the future of the practice on a sound financial footing plus ensuring efficient use of the premises by offering extra services for patient benefit. Practice income had reduced over the last few years, and although the most recent GP contract offered an uplift in capitation fees (*the amount paid to the practice for each registered patient*), much of the benefit will be lost because of the increase in staff national insurance contributions and wage costs.

The issue of requesting an appointment whether face to face, via the telephone or using the online system was also raised. Some PPG members had used the electronic triage system successfully, but it was agreed that many, perhaps more elderly patients, would not be able to use this and it was a cause of patient concern. Dr Cronin also pointed out that longer delays for patients to see hospital consultants was also adding to patient concerns and to GP workload.

It was suggested that if the practice might be able to improve communication with patients, perhaps explaining the number and types of clinicians available, current dispensary issues, and the surgery's future plans, this might help alleviate patient concerns. Communication might be via the practice newsletters, on the screens in the waiting area, on the surgery website and at the planned Health Fair. **Action: all to consider further.**

It was agreed that the next two agenda items: New GP contract and the effect on the surgery and the Impact on NI and lower earnings threshold had been covered within the item 6 discussion.

**7) Dispensary update and plans for the future:** Chelsea W confirmed the change from "automatic ordering" of repeat prescriptions, because of errors, omissions or over-ordering of medications. The system is now for patients to request what is needed, either :

- **In Person** Tick the boxes on the green repeat medication slip, OR write a note stating what medications is needed, and drop it off or post it to the surgery. Please only order medications that you need.
- **By e-mailing the dispensary** ([nwicb.blofield.dispensary@nhs.net](mailto:nwicb.blofield.dispensary@nhs.net)) or
- **by requesting via the surgery's online system** <https://systmonline.tpp-uk.com/2/Login?Redir=1>

Chelsea confirmed that patients should allow five working days before collecting their medication, so all should allow 7 days (because of weekends) or more if Bank Holidays intervene. At the last meeting information had been given about the proposed new Titan repeat ordering system but this is temporarily on hold.

**8) Health Fayre/Fair due in September:** Gill H confirmed the involvement of the Integrated Care Co-Ordinator from Norfolk County Council who will support the event. Proposed date is either **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> September**, within the practice premises, which will be "closed" for normal surgeries between 1 – 4 pm. It is intended that local organisations, services and charities will be invited to hold a "stall". Refreshments will be available and it is hoped that patients of all ages will attend. **Action: for further discussion at next meeting.**

**9) PPG volunteers to help in the surgery:** Gill H continued the discussion from the previous meeting where it had been suggested that a PPG volunteer could be in the surgery to help direct people, offer leaflets, hear suggestions or concerns, and generally support the practice.

PPG member Jane Hancy had proposed this initially and suggested that a regular session, perhaps on a Monday morning once a month, with 6 PPG members managing this on a rota basis, might be the way forward. If there was sufficient support, the system could be trialled in June or July.

**Action: interested PPG members should:**

- email Gill H indicating their willingness to support the scheme,
- say whether they were willing to share their mobile 'phone numbers to be part of a WhatsApp group and
- indicate strengths or experience in this field.

**Guidelines for volunteers will also need to be compiled and agreed.**

**10) Format of future meetings:** Gill H queried whether PPG members would prefer to organise the agenda of future meetings themselves, or were happy for the practice team to continue to do so. No strong feelings about organising the agenda themselves were expressed by PPG members, so presumably all are happy with the current arrangements, if the practice is! A cut off time for evening meetings was suggested, so 5:30 pm start and 7:00 pm finish was agreed.

A first aid course including the use of defibrillators was requested by one PPG member. Training might be available from the local St John Ambulance Brigade or the local Community First Responder team, quoting John Dolamore at the contact.

**11) Newsletter:** A draft copy of the April/May 2025 News and Views newsletter had been circulated at the meeting, and all thanked Peter B for his work in putting it together. There is space for anything else of interest to be added. It was suggested that doctors' names and personal interests could be included. It was also suggested that perhaps it could be printed on coloured paper, to attract patients' attention, and copies made readily available to patients in waiting areas, in the dispensary and handed out by PPG volunteers.

**12) AOB :**

**a) Park Run (or walk) held at Lingwood (Village Hall area) and many other venues on Saturday mornings from 9 am.** PPG member Ivan Block has been appointed a Park Run marshal at Lingwood and has proposed that a special session be held on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> June at Lingwood, highlighting Blofield Surgery as a Park Run surgery. He requested help from volunteers at that session, e.g. time keepers. Ivan also requested first aid and defibrillator training, as he holds the kit during Park Runs. If anyone is available to be a standby first aider at Park Run sessions, please contact him.

**b) Zipper Club:** the Norfolk Zipper Club is holding a fundraising event on 31<sup>st</sup> August.  
[https://www.facebook.com/mellordrama/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/mellordrama/?locale=en_GB)

**13) Date of next meeting:** this had been planned for **Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> September**, though in view of the likelihood of the Health Fair being held near that date, the meeting date may be revised.

The meeting finished at 4:10 p.m. All were thanked for their attendance and input.