

Reach Healthcare Patients Participation Group (PPG)
Minutes of meeting held on 5th June 2025
At Lordswood Healthy Living Centre, and online Ms Teams

Present:

Patients

Alan – Acting Chair	Chris	Hannah
Jeremy - online	Keith	Lesley
Lin – online	Lorraine S	Neil
Nicola	Paul	Phil
Sue Sc– online	Sue Sm.	Thomas
Tina		

Reach

Dr. Carpenter – GP Partner
Sallyann - Comms
Stacey – Operations Manager

Guest:

Mark Greenstreet, Medway Public Health Directorate

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. The Acting Chair reminded the etiquette of speaking/raising hands as this was a “hybrid” meeting of the PPG.

Apologies for absence were received from Bernie, Carol, Gill, Jeanette, John, Lucia, Marion R, Mary, Melissa, Peter, Phillip, Sandra, Susan C, Trevor, Dr. Lall

In the spirit of friendship and fellowship, some personal news was shared and there was also a remembrance for the sad loss of an active member.

2. Notes of previous meeting

Notes of the previous meeting of 12th February 2025 have been distributed and are available on website.

3. Prescriptions

Dr Carpenter responded to the issues sent prior to this evening’s meeting,

A clear, accessible flowchart of the full prescription journey is being created and should be ready soon. Requests for repeat prescriptions have always been 4 days and surgeries have now been informed of this.

Repeats will drop off after 12 months if not requested, this is a safety mechanism for steroid creams etc.

There is now an option on the telephone for Prescriptions which is open between 10am and 2pm. It was reported that both ASDA and Fenns are behind on prescriptions, although the patient can ring the surgery and be given a code to take elsewhere, provided that the pharmacy has not already printed the prescription.

One off prescriptions should be timely in particular, antibiotics which are urgent. Also, hospital prescriptions should be prescribed in a timely manner.

Sometimes medication dosage is altered if there is a supply problem, for instance a month's supply instead of two months. Texts are sent out to patients to highlight shortages and is also in the staff newsletter.

If a long-term shortage do patients receive a further text? Sallyann will check this.

Medication reviews do vary, certain medications require regular reviews, long term illnesses a yearly review. Patients advised to contact Prescription Team if concerned.

How does the practice action letters, letter is received by the practice the same time as received by patient. Medication advised by a consultant should be actioned at point of contact not by GP initially.

4. **Actions from previous meeting.**

Results.

Outage Patients Information Leaflet Liaison	Chair to set up	Carry over to next meeting
Future PCN/Wellness initiatives at drop ins	PCN to communicate with chair	on agenda
Share video EDI	Dr Lall	Sally/Stacey will chase
Patients Newsletter New Date to be set, suggested article, patient awareness of demand and capacity	Comms Lead	Completed
Reception Script – new group set up	Chair	Completed
Creation of Visual Chart for Patients	PPG Member L	Sallyann to contact Lucia
Set up small group to communicate with non-internet patients	Chair	New Group set up
Forward concern re Balmoral Gardens patients re broken chairs	Operations Manager	Completed
Find out if Anima can be filled in before submission	Dr Lall/Management	It is not possible, but Stacey will double check

5. **Updates from Practice**

Dr Murthy has left the practice, the partners are now Dr Lall, Dr Sinha and Dr Carpenter. There are two new GPs joining the practice.

The Practice have received funding for **women's health hub** and menopause workshops are being held - patients will receive an invitation by text message. They have also been involved in a project for a pelvic floor App called MUTU. Ladies who have given birth in the past 2 years have received a text message invitation to sign up. Moreover, they have had a gynaecologist from Medway Hospital run a clinic from our Lordwood surgery to trial hospital care in the community. This is something Reach are hoping will be taken forward in an aim to reduce the hospital waiting lists for this service. These are hospital patients so not all of the patients will be Reach-registered patients.

The group asked how patients can contact with individual concerns, as there is no general practice email. Firstly, patients can visit the surgery or telephone, if the receptionist response is not satisfactory or does not immediately direct to the relevant team, patients can ask to speak with a manager. If there is still discontent or no satisfactory response from practice, the patient can start the complaints procedure (copies on website and in waiting rooms).

The group asked for staffing numbers at the Gillingham surgeries, as there had been concern about Malvern Road GP presence. There are GPs at both surgeries, and nurses, with physios at Balmoral. Managers visit each week.

The group was reminded that emailing GPs/staff direct or intimidating reception staff with PPG status is not appropriate. The practice will contact people individually to remind them of this as NHS email addresses are confidential. Please see PPG terms of reference and data protection.

6. **Anima Online Triage/Consultation – Assessing routine appointments**

The Chair forwarded information to the Practice prior to the meeting. The Acting Chair summarised Dr Lall's response below

The Practice acknowledges the challenges patients face when trying to access both same-day and routine appointments. They are actively making changes to the Anima system, with improvements coming into effect as early as next week.

The Practice can distinguish between urgent and routine requests, but they've found that even when routine access is left open, many patients use it to submit same-day concerns. This leads to the system becoming overwhelmed, as it did recently when same-day capacity was full by 8:45am, while routine requests stayed open until 12:30. Unfortunately, some of those routine requests should have been dealt with as urgent, creating pressure on the triage GP and resulting in patients being redirected to pharmacies, 111, or urgent treatment centres. This is understandably frustrating for everyone involved.

The Practice is reviewing how and when the system should close and agrees that clearer communication is needed so patients know when and how to use Anima appropriately. They are also looking at how other practices across Kent and Medway manage similar pressures. At a national level, NHS Digital is working with the BMA and NHS England on safety concerns, particularly around the proposal to keep online systems open all day — something currently under review. It's worth recognising that while Anima isn't a perfect solution, it has significantly increased the Practice's ability to handle high volumes of patient requests and to allocate the right clinician to each case. Data from the phone lines show that more patients are now being processed than before Anima was introduced.

In short, the Practice is not standing still. They are reviewing systems, learning from others, and committed to ensuring safe, fair, and timely access for patients, while also safeguarding staff from unsafe workloads.

It was suggested the PPG consider reaching out to our MPs to raise awareness of the pressures on both primary care and urgent treatment centres — something PPG may want to explore as a group.

7. **Medication Reviews/Appointment locations**

Patients are receiving appointments or reviews with no choice of location (both Gillingham and Lordswood/Walderslade) which is totally unsuitable for public transport, resulting in some patients not attending. This is contrary to patient information at the merger.

Practice response. Some clinics are held at specific locations due to equipment/staff only available at one location. Walderslade, Balmoral and Malvern do not have space available to hold these clinics. Malvern Surgery has an ongoing issue with bloods being collected at 9am so blood tests appointments are not available. The practice will consider amending its system to show patients by postcode and by "Dr. Walderslade" or "Dr. Gillingham" to show the patient's normal areas.

When a text for a review is received with no local availability, depending on clinic/appointment, patients advised to telephone to find out further availability, but this may be in a few weeks' time. Not all GPs show on Anima. Sallyann will add all GPs to Anima.

8. PPG Subgroups Update

Newsletter – Spring newsletter agreed and distributed.

NHS App Training - Workshops were held by Digital Kent with PPG members also attending, this was very successful and has resulted in an increase in number of patients using the App. Taking forward in the future as Digital Kent have not received further funding to run the workshops. Sallyann will request Sarah (PCN) to carry this forward and thanked everyone for their help. The Acting Chair suggested that PPG members could help in waiting rooms at vaccine clinics etc.

PCN/Wellness – Sue and others of the sub-group attended an online meeting but has not heard anything further, Sallyann to follow up.

No Internet Patients – this is being actioned by Sue.

Reception Script – a subgroup has been set up, PPG members agreed to an online meeting, Sue to carry forward.

9. Medway Valley PCN – Presentation by our guest, Mark Greenstreet, of Medway Public Health – New Falls Management Programme (FAME)

Active Medway have received £285,000 to fund this project. A leaflet has already been forwarded to all members by email. It is a 20-week course, and 8 sessions are running across Medway. GPs can refer patients, also self-referral by email or telephone on the flyer which is available on the leaflet which can be found in waiting rooms.

10. Any other business

- What is the current staffing numbers at Malvern and Balmoral, Stacey explained the numbers. Blood tests are not available at Malvern as collection is at 9.00am, the practice are trying to change this.
- How will the huge potential new builds across the area affect the practice? This is a subject for longer debate in due course.
- Keith thanked the staff for scanning in all his paperwork.
- Could name and who they are be on NHS app? This will be looked at.

11. Date for next meeting (provisional) Thursday 4th September 2025 at 5.30pm

Sallyann will discuss with Sue about future timings.

ACTIONS.

Clear accessibly flowchart for prescriptions.	Dr. Carpenter
Long-term shortage prescripts. Do patients receive further texts?	Practice SF
Outage Patient Information Leaflet	Chair
Share Video EDI	Dr. Lall
System amendment to show patients postcode/GP 'location identity'	Practice
Add all GPs to Anima	Practice SF
Take forward NHS App training	PCN
PCN/Wellness – no further activity	Practice -SF