

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 / 25

At the 2024 AGM, with no new volunteers joining the Committee, the 5 previous members all agreed to continue for a further 12 months. There is now an urgent need to attract at least 1 or 2 new, active members and to this end a committee recruitment poster has been displayed on the two PG notice boards at Bridgewater Surgeries. The 2023/4 Action Plan has been reviewed and rolled forward to the current year.

1. COMMUNICATIONS and INFORMATION

Whilst the PG has been kept well-informed about changes and developments by the practice manager, our efforts to engage with more patients have produced few results with only a trickle of responses to the leaflets and posters displayed in patient waiting areas.

Regarding the procedure (Friends & Family test) whereby all patients registered for SMS text-messaging are now sent a form after each appointment inviting feedback on their experience, the results show that 96% were satisfied / very satisfied with the service they received.

2. PROJECTS and SUPPORT

Total Triage

The practice involved the PG in the run-up to the introduction of Total Triage in October when an open session was held (virtually and face-to-face) and the implementation plan presented for information and discussion. When assessed after 3 months, the PG was advised that whilst there were some patients who were not happy with the new arrangements, generally the GP-managed Total Triage system was working as planned, with patients benefiting from the rapid call-back and thus receiving a prompter service. Those patients with IT 'access' problems (around 200) were flagged and given special attention. Procedures were subject to continuous review.

Social Prescribing

As one of the Action Plan's key topics, the committee held an instructive session with the practice's 2 Social Prescribers in November when an account of their work was presented. This was followed up by a webinar in March (to coincide with National Social Prescribers Day) when a wider patient audience had the opportunity to question our 2 Social Prescribers about the range of non-clinical opportunities offered to patients to improve their health and well-being.

Healthy Living

As Bridgewater Surgeries is a recognised Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) 'parkrun practice', the PG has been active in promoting its local parkrun (Cassiobury) by being involved in the production of parkrun posters which have now been distributed to many practices, pharmacies and other outlets within Watford.

As a further step, plans are being considered whereby the practice 'takes over' the marshalling of a specific Cassiobury parkrun, involving staff and patient volunteers.

The PG also supports the 'NHS-Better Health – Let's Do It' website which promotes apps appertaining to Losing Weight, Quitting Smoking, Getting Active and Drinking Less. These include the popular 'Couch to 5k' app which has attracted more than 7m downloads nationally.

The practice is planning to set up in-house well-being projects (diets, exercise etc) initially for staff but then hopefully cascaded to targeted patients. The PG welcomes this which it sees as an opportunity to promote its activities.

Support at Clinic

The PG provided 'Meeter and Greeter' support at a busy Flu / COVID clinic in October and plans to offer this in 2025.

Carers Support

In May, the Committee supported a fund-raising Coffee Morning and Cake Sale for dementia charities, providing a valuable opportunity to meet up with carers and patients affected by dementia.

'Did Not Attend' (DNA) data (Patients failing to attend surgery appointments)

Although national data shows Bridgewater Surgeries is in the top quartile of patient attendance performers, the practice monitors DNAs closely with courteous prompts to patients to keep their appointments.

3. NHS HERTS & WEST ESSEX INTEGRATED CARE BOARD (ICB) – PPG STEERING GROUP

This group promotes the development of PPGs across Herts and West Essex. Their work has included producing a PPG Toolkit, running a 'Buddy' scheme and supporting the Patient Engagement Forum Facebook Group to which over 500 patients have now signed up. This is a useful way of sharing information which Facebook users are encouraged to join.

4. TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND PROACTIVE HEALTHCARE

With the number of people waiting to start hospital treatment reaching a record high, more emphasis is being placed on preventive healthcare, harnessing technological advances. For example, getting results of diagnostic tests on our phones, followed up by personalised information and advice about how to make relevant lifestyle changes to improve our health. As a step in that direction, the PG encourages use of the NHS app which is prominently displayed on the practice website and is now used by a majority (61%) of Bridgewater Surgeries-registered patients.

CONCLUSION: Just as the practice continues to expand, so the Patients Group needs to attract additional active members, if it is to become more effective.

Russell Cleaver

Chair

May 2025