

Ashfield Surgery Patient Participation Group Newsletter

Issue: September 2025



Welcome

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) plays an important role in representing patients' voices and working with the practice to improve services. This newsletter shares key updates from our September meeting, including flu and Covid vaccinations, surgery news, changes to opening hours, and how patients can get involved.

Flu & Covid Vaccinations – Protecting Our Community

Flu vaccination season is underway! The programme began with 2–3 year olds, under-18s, and pregnant patients. Uptake in young children has historically been low (just 36% last year), so we are encouraging parents to protect their little ones this year.

From October, flu vaccinations will be available to the wider population, alongside Covid boosters for those aged 65+ and patients with underlying health conditions.

Surgery Opening Hours – Changes this Autumn

The surgery opening hours are changing in line with new NHS requirements.

Opening Hours from October 1st

Monday to Friday 08:00 – 18:30

Saturday vaccination clinics: 4th, 11th, and 18th October

These busy sessions will see flu and Covid vaccines delivered together, making it easier for patients. The PPG will also be present to provide support and promote our work.

Good news: The group that Ashfield Surgery belongs to has been recognised as the top-performing group North Birmingham for immunisations and amongst the best in Birmingham/Solihull. This fantastic achievement reflects the dedication of staff and the strong response from our patients.

Using Appointments Wisely – Tackling Missed Bookings

Missed appointments (DNAs – Did Not Attend) remain a challenge for the surgery. In August alone, 100 appointments were missed at Ashfield – 43 with GPs and 57 with nurses.

The good news is that this represents a one-third reduction compared to previous months. Patients now have more ways than ever to cancel appointments if they cannot attend:

- Call the surgery
- Reply to the text reminder
- Use the NHS App
- **Soon** – cancel via the telephone system even when the surgery is closed

The practice is adopting a firmer approach to persistent non-attendance. While removal from the patient list is always a last resort, it may be necessary in extreme cases to ensure fair access for all.

Total Triage – Nine Months of Learning

Since its introduction, the Rapid Health/Total Triage system has transformed how patients access care. In August, the practice processed:

- 1,144 admin requests
- 1,755 medical requests, half of which were automatically triaged

The most common reasons for medical requests were:

- General medical concerns (500)
- Musculoskeletal issues (250)
- Mental health support (150)

Appointment outcomes from triage included:

- 20% Urgent / Same Day
- 37% Next Day
- 16% Within 5 days
- 27% Routine

From October, medical requests will be accepted 7am–3pm, ensuring the team has time to process them before closing. Admin requests remain available throughout the day.

Overall feedback has been positive, and work continues to refine the system. Patients have asked whether phlebotomy appointments could be included – unfortunately, this is not possible at present, but the practice is looking at new ways to schedule annual checks to make life easier.

Total Triage – Getting the Help you Need

It is acknowledged that some may struggle with completing the form in order for people to be directed to the appropriate service. There are multiple ways to access and complete the form:

- Online at home either yourself or with a friend/family
- Via phone with the surgery team
- In the surgery. An iPad can be lent to the person to complete the form.

Unfortunately, due to the layout of the surgery and privacy concerns, the Reception staff are not allowed to help with completing the form in the waiting room.

Staffing Updates – Welcoming New Faces

- Drs Wilkinson & Ananya will be with us until Christmas, and Dr Willis will stay for a year
- Dr Black is extending for another year
- We welcome two new receptionists, Farrah and Taylor
- Susie has joined as phlebotomist, and Evans continues to receive excellent patient feedback
- Physician Associate Sameera continues her valued role, closely supervised and assessed

Remembering Pauline Manfield

We were saddened by the passing of Pauline Manfield, aged 95, in August. Pauline was a long-standing PPG member, always contributing thoughtful insights. She was also a consultant paediatrician at Good Hope Hospital, where she helped establish the children's department in the 1960s.

Her dedication to healthcare and the local community leaves a lasting legacy. A tribute can be found on the UHB website.

<https://www.uhb.nhs.uk/news-and-events/news/remembering-dr-pauline-manfield-a-paediatrics-pioneer/>



Travel Vaccinations – What You Need to Know

Travel vaccinations are resource-intensive. Each patient requires 30–60 minutes of nurse time, including administration and multiple appointments for some vaccines. This makes flexibility difficult, so patients are encouraged to plan ahead and book early when arranging travel.

Looking Ahead – Get Involved

The PPG is exploring new ways to communicate, including resurrecting this very newsletter! We believe it will help share important information and celebrate successes with patients.

 **Next PPG Meeting: Tuesday 2nd December at 6pm**

Please contact nick.cahm@gmail.com if you wish to join the PPG.