

**Minutes of Patient Participation Group Meeting
At Eastfield House Surgery
Tuesday 24th August 2021 at 6.30 pm**

Present: Katie Beale, GP Partner
Liz Pope, Practice Manager
Alison Ebbatson, Reception Manager
Judith Kerry, Practice Matron
Elaine Hall, Pharmacist

9 patients attended

1. Welcome & Introductions

Dr Katie Beale welcomed everyone to the meeting and it was especially nice to see some new faces who were joining us for the first time.

2. Practice Update

Two new members of staff have joined the surgery since our last meeting. Susan Atkinson is our new Social Prescriber who started with us on 3rd August 2021. Social Prescribing is a new role to General Practice and Susan is currently undergoing training for the role. Susan will receive referrals from our clinicians for patients who need support around lifestyle, long term conditions, low level support with mental health, patients who are lonely or isolated or have social needs affecting their wellbeing. There are many services in the community that Susan will be able to signpost patients to and she is currently building a directory of these services.

In addition Susan will be accepting referrals for patients who have been referred to three new services that the surgery is taking part in; Long Covid, Cancer Awareness and Weight Management. Due to the pandemic these new services have been identified as areas where patients need extra support.

Dr Katie Beale has made the decision to retire as a Partner at the end of December 2021 however, she will still be working as a locum at Eastfield. What this means for her patients are that they will be transferred to a new GP. We have been recruiting and have another female GP who is planning to start with us in January 2022 who will be taking over Katie's list.

Alison Ebbatson will also be retiring as Reception Manager at the end of December 2021. She has worked at the surgery for 20 years and has been Reception Manager for 14 years. She will not be leaving but handing over the management role to one of our existing receptionists, Tania Hart. Alison will continue to do the job that she loves on the front desk assisting our patients.

3. Flu/Covid Booster Vaccinations

This year we will be running our flu vaccination programme with the proposed Covid booster vaccination programme. We have joined together with the other two practices in our PCN, Strawberry Hill and Downland Practice to provide this service at the Royal British Legion in Pelican Lane, Newbury town centre. We are still awaiting Government approval for the Covid Booster vaccinations but we are pressing ahead with contingency plans for this service. Our PCN practices are contacting patients aged 80 years and over to book them an appointment w/c 13th September 2021. We will work through the cohorts as we did for the Covid vaccination programme earlier this year. We aim to book patients 75-79 years w/c 20th September. If the Covid Boosters do not get Government approval then it is likely that we will bring the flu clinics back to practice.

4. Premises

Our search for bigger premises continues. Relocation to the proposed new development at the Kennet Centre site is still a possibility however this will not be ready until 2026 at the earliest. The predicted growth for our patient population in the next 5 years is 4,500 and our building is already 3 x smaller than the recommended size for our practice list of 14,200 patients. With this in mind we are hopeful that another site will be identified that can be developed much sooner than 2026.

There is a plot of land for sale to the south of Newtown Road, Newbury. This was purchased by Tesco 15 years ago with a view to expanding their car park however, the plot wasn't needed and was sold off to two local businessmen who have put the plot up for sale. The land backs onto the Tesco Pinchington Lane superstore which is further out than we would like but the site does have potential to relocate our premises. Our developer has made contact with Tesco to discuss the possibility of access via their car park which would hopefully benefit patients with the use of a pharmacy, store and coffee shop.

Katie asked patients to keep their eye out for any potential sites that might be suitable for our relocation. Jill suggested that the Newbury Society might be worth contacting which Liz will follow up.

The priority is to find an interim solution so that we can continue to operate as we continue to grow.

5. PPG Update

Jill reported that the St Nicolas Hall is going to start up their coffee mornings in February 2022 and wondered if the PPG would be interested in booking a date to run stalls. Sadly some PPG members are no longer available to help due to ill health. The PPG need 8-10 people to help on the day. Katie thanked the PPG for their support and we would very much like them to run the event on our behalf. Jill will book a date in February, avoiding half term.

Annie was not able to come to the meeting today but Jill said that Annie hopes the touring theatre may be able to put on a production the year after next.

6. Patient questions and suggestions:

One of the newer members to the meeting asked if ear syringing was going to be made available again at the practice. She suffers with hearing loss and needs her ears syringed on a regular basis. She is currently paying privately; £80.00 for both ears.

Katie explained that ear syringing was not part of the core services that we are contracted to provide and due to the pandemic we are currently prioritising those services where we need to catch up, such as long term conditions and chronic disease, immunisations, smears and dressings. Katie explained that ear syringing can come with its own complications so clinicians need to be skilled to perform the ear care. The practice does understand how debilitating it is for patients who cannot hear properly due to wax blocking the ear canal and the partners have discussed this on multiple occasions. Katie will speak to the partners to see if there is anything that can be done for patients who are in desperate need of help with ear syringing.

One patient said it had taken 8 minutes to get through on the telephone line recently and this included the lengthy message at the start of the call. He appreciated that the information given in the message was necessary. Another member reiterated the concern over the time it took to get through on the phone, she is a single parent and using a pay as you go phone to get through to us.

We are constantly reviewing and monitoring the volume of calls we receive. We have seen an increase in incoming calls since December 2020 from 7,387 incoming calls in the month of December to 9,606 in the month of July 2021. We aim to have 6 members of the reception team answering calls throughout the day however, each call is different and requires time to manage and the majority of calls are as straight forward as booking an appointment.

We are still operating a triage system for our telephone calls which is why we have not opened up the online appointment book. It is necessary for our receptionists to ask patients the reason for the appointment to help the GP prepare and identify the urgency of the call and to determine if they need a face to face appointment. Our current wait time is three weeks for a routine appointment which is considered acceptable. We will continue to review our appointment system.

In addition to the incoming calls, our doors are open so our reception team are dealing with queries face to face and also enquiries via our website. We have seen an increase in this service as well which has added to GP workload. As such we have continued with our recruitment throughout 2020/21 to help with the spread of workload but we are also constrained by the size of the premises.

One patient raised her difficulty in being able to provide a photograph that her GP had requested. She had to wait for her son to help her as she did not have the facility to do this herself and there will be many patients in a similar situation. Katie explained that the facility for patients to upload photographs works extremely well from a GP perspective and they recognise that not every patient will be able to do this or get help to do this. If there are problems then the patient should be seen face to face.

Due to the difficulty of some people finding it hard to hear today, and as we are now moving into the colder months, our next meeting will be held inside the surgery.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 30th November 2021