**Corbridge Medical Group**

**Patient Representation Group**

**Wednesday 27th July 2022, Corbridge Health Centre, 7pm**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

MM, PO, AE, JJ (Practice Manager)

**Apologies for absence:**

DP, BC, NL (Reception Manager), Dr RB (GP Partner)

**Relaunch of the Patient Participation Group**

Our last meeting was 27th November 2019 (having cancelled the March 2020 meeting at short notice) and over the period of the pandemic we have seen lots of changes but have been unable to meet formally. The purpose of this evening's meeting was to relaunch our PPG and establish some dates and agendas for future meetings. SL, FM, MB have all stepped down from the PPG. We thank them for their contributions over the last 12 years and wish them well for the future.

We discussed how best to attract new members who are representative the wider patient population and agreed that personal invitations are often most effective. It was also agreed that we should devise an advert for the website and also perhaps put articles in Corbridge Matters and the Riding Mill Parish news.

We looked back on the process we used to set up the original group which involved an application form asking potential members to give information about which aspects of the community they could represent. It was agreed that this would be useful again. Julie will start to advertise and ask potential volunteers to fill in one of the forms so we can be assured that we are covering all sections of the practice population.

**How has it been?**

We had a discussion about how the practice had functioned throughout the pandemic, describing some of the ways in which patient care was affected by the constraints placed upon us and the steps we have taken more recently to return to more 'normal' service although we are still applying certain protocols and infection control measures such as mask wearing, social distancing etc.

Group members expressed gratitude and appreciation for the way the practice had functioned during this difficult 2 years. Our doors were never closed and we maintained an almost fully functional service throughout that time even though much of this was via remote consultations and telephone calls.

JJ specifically asked about how well the practice had communicated with patients during this period. Our use of text messaging, alerts on the website and the telephone auto-attendant messages had been crucial to ensuring patients were kept informed of changes and key information during that time. PPG members agreed communications had been effective and that some key lessons could be taken forward for future patient communications eg increased use of text messages, website alerts etc

Some services had been redesigned out of necessity during the pandemic whilst others had disappeared. It was noted that ear syringing had ceased and that this has caused issues for many patients. JJ was unable to give an update on when this service will resume but she had added it to a list of potential services for our Enhanced Access service (discussed later on the agenda).

A question was raised about booking and recalls for B12 injections which are usually on a 12 week regular cycle. JJ confirmed that we do rely on patients to book these at the appropriate intervals (as these can vary for each patient) but that, because of recent changes to our nurses appointment schedules, we haven't had appointments available 12 weeks ahead. This should be less of a problem in future now that we have reverted back to our pre-pandemic appointments schedule.

Patients with certain long-term conditions are now being invited in for annual review appointments in the month of their birthday. This new system was introduced in April 2021 and is proving very effective as a means of ensuring that patients are up to date with blood monitoring and medication reviews. Other issues requiring forward planning eg PSA tests or DEXA scans are recalled on a diary system which codes the requirement ahead of time and is then picked up on a monthly search.

Many patients are now monitoring their own BPs using machines at home and this is something we are being encouraged to continue with. It is helpful for patients to come and have BP monitoring done here at the surgery as part of their annual review along with blood tests etc but ongoing monitoring can be done at home on machines which are reasonably priced.

We discussed the issue of blood results and the best method for communicating these to patients. JJ described the current Patient Online system which, with the correct levels of access in place, will show blood results. The opening up of the online record is coming later this year which will make this more routine for patients via the NHS App or via Patient Online.

The resumption of directly bookable face to face appointments from June was welcomed but a question was raised about how long it is now taking to book a GP appointment – usually 3 weeks. JJ explained that the face to face appointments are now 15mins to allow for more time with each patient following such a long absence and also to allow time to wipe down surfaces in between patients. As a result there are few appointment slots for face to face appointments each day than there were pre-pandemic. We do, however, have an embargo system where at 8am each morning a number of appointments are released 7 days ahead with each GP. When looking online, patients will see these become available in the early morning but of course these do book up quite quickly so they may have already gone by later in the day.

A question was raised about how patients can determine what is suitable for a telephone call (as opposed to Face to face) eg skin problems. JJ described how we now have a text messaging system which enables patients to send photographs of skin issues so the doctor can have a look before ringing the patient back and this was welcomed as something which would be beneficial for the future. Patients may not be aware of this however and this led to a suggestion that we should produce some guidance for patients on how the GPs are working now. This reminded us of a leaflet we devised a number of years ago and which had been well-received. JJ agreed to send this to PPG members and we would discuss how best to devise a similar leaflet for the current service.

**Primary Care Networks**

Over the course of the last 3-4 years one initiative which has **not** been stalled by the pandemic is the development of Primary Care Networks (PCNs). JJ described a number of new roles which are now working within our team and providing services for patients. These roles have been funded by PCNs on a 5 year national contract and the aim is to provide additional resource into practice teams to relieve pressure on GPs.

* First Contact Physiotherapist
* Living Well Co-ordinators
* Mental Health Practitioners
* Paramedics
* Clinical Pharmacist

It was agreed that patients should be made aware of these different roles and how best to access these services when required. This would be incorporated into the leaflet discussed earlier. Case studies would be a useful way of illustrating how each of these team members can help patients and JJ agreed to pull some of these together for inclusion in the leaflet or for publication on the website.

**Enhanced Access Hours**

JJ described changes which would be coming in October to the extended access service which has been running in our building for the last 5 years. Under a new specification the service will move on Saturdays to 3 new hub locations (Hexham, Prudhoe and either Haltwhistle or Bellingham) but the Monday to Friday service will still be based here in Corbridge. More information on this will be presented to the PPG at the next meeting once these proposals have been agreed.

**Friends and Family feedback**

The Friends and Family survey was suspended during the pandemic but restarted on 1st July 2022. We are currently using text messages as a way of capturing this brief feedback from patients who have had appointments within each month. It was suggested that we place a notice on the TV screen to reassure patients that this text is not a scam so they know to expect it and respond accordingly. As before, Julie will keep this as a standing agenda item and will produce a summary of the feedback for each meeting so this can be discussed and any general themes or issues can be addressed as part of our action plan.

**Date of the next meeting**

It was agreed that Wednesday evenings are good for the majority and that the next meeting would be held on **Wednesday 28th September 2022 at 7pm**