**Corbridge Medical Group**

**Patient Representation Group**

**Wednesday 8th March 2023, Corbridge Health Centre, 7pm**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

EC, MM, AE, PB, JD (Practice Administrator), Dr RB (GP Partner), JJ (Practice Manager)

**Apologies for absence:**

DP, MD, PO, BC, NL (Reception Manager),

**Welcome and Introductions**

We welcomed JD to the group who was attending in NL's absence.

**Corbridge Matters**

The article discussed at the last meeting had been published in the February edition of Corbridge Matters. The editors of Riding Mill Parish News had suggested an edited version for their magazine and JJ agreed to liaise with them and with the Practice Manager at Branch Surgery, Stocksfield to ensure that she was happy with the content because Riding Mill residents are split between our two practices.

**Appointments Guide**

This has been available in paper form in our foyer since the last meeting and a copy is available on our website front page.

It was noted that there appear to be no appointments available online beyond 17th April for Dr Stanley. JJ agreed to look into this and ensure that future appointments are opened up for bookings and to check the settings to see if these were limiting visibility. Ideally we would aim to have schedules available up to 3 months ahead for all GPs.

**Texting Booking Links for patients**

We are now using this facility to enable bookings by text for patients who require blood tests. These are identified each month on our diary system and patients have responded very well with more than half being booked using the text link which reduced phone calls into the surgery and allows patients to choose from a range of available slots up to 6 weeks ahead.

**Auto-attendant Message**

JJ had updated the telephone welcome message with some new information about Covid vaccinations and a slightly shorter introductory message – feedback is always welcome to ensure this remains up to date and useful for patients. The Spring Booster campaign for Covid will be for patients aged 75 and over and those aged over 5 who are immunosuppressed – once we have details about where vaccinations sessions will be held we will post the information on our website front page.

**Staffing Updates**

JJ reviewed the staffing list for the practice team giving some updates on new staff members and changes to some roles as detailed below:-

We have two new **GP Registrars** with us until August – Dr Joshua Jones (full time) and Dr Maddie Moat (Part-time).

Our salaried GP, Dr Jo Dow left us in January and we have successfully recruited three new **Salaried GPs** who will be joining the practice in the current months:-

Dr Stella McGarry will be working 2 ½ days per week from 17th April.

Dr Faye McKewan will be working 3 days a week from 1st June

Dr Kate Foster will be working 4 days a week from August.

These new additions to our GP team will provide much needed additional capacity and we look forward to welcoming them into the practice. The locum GPs, Dr Gina Middleton and Dr Alex Duncan may still be used to cover holidays and other absences when required but will be here much less often once these Salaried GPs are all in post. It was suggested that we put some information on the TV screen in the waiting room and on the website about the new GPs as soon as possible so patients become familiar with them and JJ agreed to do this.

We have a new **Healthcare Assistant**, Belinda Newton, who joined the team in January and works alongside Louise Leonard to provide blood tests, BP checks, ECGs, NHS Healthchecks and some vaccinations under supervision.

Helen Mathie (our **First Contact Physio**) will be moving on in April and we await information about her replacement who will hopefully start soon after

Dilal Khalil joined out team in February as **Clinical Pharmacist** and will be undertaking medication reviews and audit work on behalf of our GPs.

The 0-19 service which includes **Health Visitors** and **School Nurses** have recently relocated to an office in Hexham so are no longer based in our building. Instead they have a centralised telephone number for parents to contact them or their admin support who will deal with any enquiries or pass on messages.

**Patient Forum for Primary Care Network (PCN)**

JJ explained that the new roles, recently introduced to primary care teams, have been funded and recruited through our Primary Care Network. The Network is made up of 11 neighbouring practices in West Northumberland and continues to be an important part of the landscape in which GP teams work. The PCN is also responsible for providing some key services such as the Enhanced Access service (which provides appointments on evenings and weekends), Covid vaccinations and some clinical services such as Diagnostic Spirometry.

The PCN is developing its own Patient Forum is asking for volunteers to join that forum from member Practices. JJ invited anyone from our PPG to represent the group on the PCN PPG and will advertise more widely if no one from our own group comes forward.

**Digital Sessions for Patients**

The PCN had recently provided training sessions in Ponteland and Hexham for patients who were interested in using digital technologies such as Online Access and text messaging but were struggling to register or needed help getting started.

This was discussed and it was agreed that, if we were able to run a session at Corbridge, there would be sufficient interest from PPG members to attend and, if advertised more widely on the website, we would probably find that lots of patients would be interested. JJ agreed to contact the PCN to see if a session could be held here at the Health Centre in the near future.

**Friends and Family Feedback**

The Friends and Family feedback for December, January and February had been circulated prior to the meeting and general themes were discussed as follows:-

Getting appointments more quickly – a comment had been made about the time patients are waiting to see particular GPs. It was agreed that perhaps having more embargoed appointments with Registrars and new Salaried GPs would free up appointments with the GP Partners so that more would be available to book ahead of time.

More face to face appointments – JJ confirmed that face to face appointments are available to book directly and have been for many months now. However, these appointments are now 15 minutes long (in order to ensure GPs have ample time with each patient) which means we can only do 4 per hour and this has an impact on the number available. Some face to face appointments unblock 7 days ahead but these tend to be booked very early each morning so we advise patients to look online just after 8am to see what is available for the following week. Patient demand, particularly over the recent Winter, is greater than we have ever experienced so the perception might be that appointments have not been available when in fact, we have had to allocate a greater number to urgent (on the day) telephone appointments. We will continue to monitor this however to see if we can find the right balance.

Automatic Check-in – patients were concerned that often the receptionist is busy on the telephone when patients are queuing to check-in at the reception desk and a suggestion was made that a self-check-in system would be beneficial. The practice considered this at various times over the years and our conclusion has always been that we prefer to have a receptionist greeting patients. Ideally, that receptionist should not be answering the telephone on the front desk but recent call volumes have made this a necessity. We will look again at the Auto-check-in devices and discuss this within our team.

Repeat Dispensing – a question was raised about prescription ordering and why some medications were authorised for a period of time eg 6 months and available to collect at the pharmacy whilst others have to be ordered each month. JJ explained the difference between 'repeat dispensing' and 'repeat prescriptions'. Repeat Dispensing is only available at Community Pharmacies (not through our dispensary) so for non-dispensing patients who are on regular repeat medications it is possible to have these automatically authorised by the GP for a period of up to 12 months. However, not all medications can be set up this way so it may still be necessary to order supplies of some items on a monthly basis. Repeat Dispensing is not available to Dispensing Doctors so those patients who collect their medications from the Health Centre cannot be set up this way.

Difficulty hearing Receptionists – patients reported that the plastic screens which were installed during the pandemic make it very difficult to hear the receptionist and a suggestion had been made that these be removed. We agreed to discuss this with our team to see whether this would be welcomed.

**AOB**

PB raised concerns about the use of date of birth to identify patients on the telephone. This can expose patients to potential identity fraud when name and date of birth are overheard or intercepted on telephone calls. A discussion took place regarding possible alternatives and it was agreed that perhaps just asking for year of birth would be better. The reason we ask for date of birth is so that receptionists and GPs can check that they have accessed the correct record before booking appointments or speaking to patients and perhaps a year of birth would be sufficient. Dr Barker agreed to discuss this with our team.

**Date of the next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on **Wednesday 14th June 2023 at 7pm**