

## **Minutes of the Patient Participation Group Meeting (PPG)**

**Held at Fourways Centre on Tuesday 4 October 2021 – 15.00 hours.**

**Present:** Dr K McConnachie, Carla Robertson, Kate Loftus, Janet Whitely, Vivienne Brathwaite, Peter Atkinson, Robert Harris, Ernest Schulte, Andrea Middlemiss, Kate Wilson, Margaret James, AnnMarie Heatly and Lorraine Conroy.

**Apologies:** 7 members sent apologies.

### **AGENDA**

**Welcome and Introduction.** Carla welcomed everybody to the meeting and each person introduced themselves to the group. Dr. Katherine McConnachie is now the new GP partner representing the practice. There are currently 19 patients who have expressed their wish to remain part of the Patient Reference Group, 16 of those have email access and 3 patients require communication via letter. This leaves a further 33 patients and it was agreed that Carla would contact them again and state that they would be removed from the group unless they contact her to confirm their wish to remain. The profile of patients on the group was discussed and it was felt that it would be helpful if some younger members could be persuaded to join. Carla explained that on previous occasions she had contacted the head of 6<sup>th</sup> form at the local High School.

Robert Harris had recently resigned from the Chair, but is willing to continue to provide a year on trend for the survey results we receive. Before undertaking an election for a replacement Chair the meeting looked at the Roles and Responsibilities of the PPG and the Chair. Everybody seemed satisfied and agreed that they were a comprehensive list of how the meetings should be conducted.

Vivienne Brathwaite volunteered to stand for the position of Chair - proposed by Peter A and seconded by Bob H. Peter A agreed to act as temporary Vice Chair until Ernest had recovered sufficiently after his impending operation, when he would assume the post.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting:** The last meeting had been held on Tuesday 21 January 2020. Because this meeting was held before the onset of Covid, the matters within the minutes did not really apply to the newly formed PPG, because too much time had elapsed. After discussions, some new principles were agreed:

- We will advertise the group via newsletter, the practice website, social media (facebook) and leaflets given to patients in the health centre and as part of the new registration process,
- Meetings would be held once a quarter, at the preferred time of between 3pm and 5 pm.
- A quorum would exist when more than half were present from the list of members,
- The patient survey would be re-started but not until after the next meeting in January
- Email addresses/ letters would be used by way of making contact with group members as appropriate.

### **Patient Survey**

The previous survey questions would be circulated to the group and these will be agreed at the next meeting.

## **Communications**

From now on members should email Vivienne directly instead of Carla.

## **Health Watch**

Health Watch is a forum for patient concerns. It works closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group, with pharmacies and G.P.'s etc., and patients can self refer for support and guidance. The Practice will advertise Health Watch again through the usual channels. It was agreed to invite our local Engagement Officer, Lesley Tweddell to our next meeting.

**Practice Update:** Covid had put the Practice under great pressure and the successful vaccination programme had caused a backlog with some treatments, which is similar to the national situation. Dr McConnachie explained how 14 patients per doctor were being dealt with each day. Some consultations were via telephone or video link. These were successful in some cases but were not for everybody and she felt that a mixture of both and face to face appointments would probably remain in future. The meeting congratulated the Practice on doing exceptionally well on getting so many people vaccinated in such a short time. Staffing was under pressure but there were no current vacant posts. There was a request from one member for more video consultations as well as group sessions for diabetics and heart disease groups.

Dr McConnachie promoted the value of patients being able to see one specific doctor who knew their condition well. Seeing the same doctor on each occasion was not always possible however.

## **Practice Access.**

Several members felt it was important that the practice should provide appointments for important things and not just urgent on the day issues. They also felt that it would be best to be able to book appointments a week in advance and found it frustrating when told to ring 111 due to the practice reaching full safe capacity.

Another group member wondered whether it would be possible to send patients an appointment via text message rather than the practice requesting the patient to make their own when they are unable to get through on the phone.

The meeting was told that the answering system on the telephone needs updating. Carla confirmed that a telephone meeting would be held shortly. The covid message was now out of date and the voice was excessively laboured, so taking up too much time. There was a discussion on the message about where one was in the queue to be answered. Some appreciated this whilst others found it unhelpful.

Carla confirmed that concerns regarding access to the practice are always fed through to the practice Access Group.

**Community Issues:** A lot of new housing had been built in and around Amble that put pressure on the resources of the Practice. The meeting felt that the developers should make some positive contribution to the community, for example providing an additional building resource within the development to help relieve some of the pressures of space. Staffing issues would make it impossible for any building to be manned, but there might be some advantage in having a building that could be used for visiting clinics or a meeting venue. As he knew him, Peter A agreed that he would write to Jeff Watson (our County Councillor) to try and persuade the next planning meeting to press a developer for some practical benefits in addition to just putting up houses.

**Any Other Business:** Obtaining access to one's own medical record was advocated by two members. This could be achieved relatively easily online and was found to be very useful.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Venue to be arranged.