

Waterfront Patients Participation Group Meeting

Thursday 16th February, 2023: 11.00 am – 12.15 pm

Attendees:

- Louise Bunce, Practice Manager
- Chris Beddall
- Clive Spicer
- Chris Swaithes
- Joan Allen, Treasurer
- Jane Spicer
- Sylvia Swaithes

Matters Arising

Brierley Hill Project (BHP)

Chris S confirmed that the BHP had recorded more vouchers distributed over the previous month for those in genuine need.

Did Not Attend (DNA) Review

Louise was pleased to inform the meeting that DNA numbers at the Waterfront have dropped in the two months since November when it was 297 to:

- 294 - December
- 164 - January

Last month's reduction in DNAs is a significant one which may show the success of the Practice "switching on" appointment reminders: a text sent on the day that a face-to-face appointment is made and two days before the due date. She confirmed the Practice will continue with this approach and continue to monitor DNAs.

Waterfront Website

Louise updated the meeting on the proposed changes of the Practice website. Following a meeting last week with the Primary Care Network (PCN) and other surgeries it had been decided that they would stay with the current website provider. It should be possible to 'customise' the style and colour of the Practice website by Summer 2023.

Prescription Ordering Direct Service (POD)

Louise noted that Clive had emailed her on behalf of the PPG and all patients who used the POD which was now ceasing operations from the 28th April, 2023. With Clive's agreement she had shared the email with POD management who had made clear that since only 14 GP Practices used the service it was not financially viable. The POD staff will be redeployed into other roles within Dudley Integrated Care Board (DICB)

Louise had asked the POD for a report on the potential impact for the Waterfront since 1,915 patients are registered to use the service which equates to a potential 100 extra calls to the surgery each day to order long term medications. Clive commented that The Office for National Statistics records four million adults who have never used the internet and 2.5 million are aged 75 years and over. There are also around 2.9 million disabled people without regular access to the web. For many, and for some time to come, the phone will be a preferred method of ordering prescriptions. Many Waterfront patients (1,915) across all age categories seem to prefer the phone to other options and will not have that facility when the service is pulled at very short notice.

Jane said that it was important to tell patients that the POD is closing. Louise said that a text had been sent to all patients who have the POD code in their record. After half term the Practice will send a text to all patients about alternative methods for getting prescriptions. The POD is also communicating with pharmacies about the change.

Clive commented that the DICB website states that *This service is changing and will no longer take your repeat prescription requests. You will be required to use the NHS App to re-order. The NHS App is quick and easy to use.* The service is not 'changing' but closing. More importantly the imperative 'You will be required to use the NHS App...' is both wrong and needlessly threatening. Why is there no mention of the other means of ordering a repeat prescription? It should be corrected. Looking at nine local surgeries options for ordering repeat prescriptions – not one mentions the NHS App.

Louise noted that it had been wrongly reported that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) doesn't allow surgeries to accept prescription requests over the telephone: this is incorrect, they will be taken although an online request is preferred. Louise had run a report that showed 16 patients had signed up for online access since the text had been sent out.

Chris S asked if there would be any value in raising the PPG's concerns about the POD closure. Louise said that other practices had raised concerns with the Clinical Director but with no success. There was a wide-ranging discussion about the NHS App. which highlighted that accessing it is challenging to the "non-tech savvy" and that gaining access online for many patients will be problematic for a range of reasons, unless they are already registered for *Patient Access*

Louise said she will produce information to send to patients about drop-in sessions to explain how to make the transition from the POD. Ultimately the Waterfront will do their best for their patients, but the closure of the POD has the potential to be extremely stressful for staff.

PPG Patient Survey

Although the 2023 NHS GP National Survey has now been sent out randomly to Waterfront patients, Jane explained that the form is only accessible to survey participants so no comparison or changes to the questions can be made for the 2023 PPG Patient Survey which ideally would 'mirror' the NHS survey. It was agreed that this will be monitored and revisited at the next meeting.

PPG Waterfront Newsletter

Clive distributed a revised draft PPG Newsletter which included details of the Prescription Ordering Direct (POD) closure and an introduction to the new Physician Associates, Sharifa Myers and Nida Vansushan. Louise will send Clive the outstanding staff photo for him to complete the newsletter for publication at the end of March.

Autumn Covid Booster

This is now successfully completed.

Treasurer's Report

Joan advised the PPG she had spent an additional £6 on two more posters for the waiting area and that the account remains in credit.

Staffing Updates

Louise informed the meeting that unfortunately Dr Austen will be leaving the practice at the end of May. The PPG members all agreed that this will be a big loss for the Waterfront: patients had found him to be a very friendly, focused professional doctor. Louise said that the Waterfront will be advertising for a full-time replacement, however, the pressure on GPs makes the role very challenging and she outlined the reasons why it is difficult to recruit full-time doctors at this time.

Jenny Ford Barnett, the new Podiatrist is settling into her new role.

Louise confirmed that the new staff name badges are in the post, they are more practical as the names can be changed!

Any Other Business

There was a discussion about PPGs across the Primary Care Network (PCN) and the viability of a PCN PPG. The CQC does recommend that Practices have an active PPG which the Waterfront has been even during the upheaval of the past three years.

Louise informed the meeting that at the recent PCN meeting the issue of digital screens was raised. Since the screens are available at no cost to the Practice as this will be covered by advertising, Louise has signed up for the Waterfront and the screen should be arriving in about four weeks. It will have the facility to run surveys which may be useful for the PPG seeking to gain patient feedback about their experiences.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m. on Wednesday 22nd March, 2023 at the Waterfront.