

Waterfront Patients Participation Group Meeting

Wednesday 26th April, 2023: 11.00 am – 12.15 pm

Attendees:

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

Matters Arising

Did Not Attend (DNA) Review

Louise noted that the DNA figures from March 2023 onwards would be reviewed at the next PPG Meeting.

At the last meeting Louise had advised that the Practice had re-activated the Family and Friends Survey which is sent to patients after an appointment. There had been 209 responses to date with 75% (155) very likely to recommend the GP Practice to friends and family, the full results were:

- 155 – very likely to recommend
- 31 - somewhat likely
- 12 – neither likely nor unlikely
- 3 – somewhat unlikely
- 8 – very unlikely

The system also allows respondents an opportunity to 'star' the practice – the result was 4.44/5 overall, which was clearly very positive. Respondents were also able to make comments about their visit and the Practice: reviewing the ten pages of responses, the overall response was that the Practice is doing a good job although, as ever, there are still areas to work on.

One key area is the time patients wait to be seen once they arrive at the surgery. Louise explained that the 'time' allowed for appointments is:

- GP – 12 minutes
- Physician Associates – 15 minutes
- Nurses – varied dependent on appointment type

Sylvia commented that people perhaps needed to recognise that other patients sometimes have major issues which GPs or health professionals cannot deal with speedily. Chris S agreed that medical professionals cannot assess how long a patient will need for an appointment until they are in the "room" and no-one would want a hurried diagnosis or treatment plan.

Chris B asked about the feasibility of putting a generic message on the screens in the waiting area about appointment time delays, or even being specific about time delays since it was often lack of communication which annoyed patients. Louise said she would check the computer screen software to assess if this was possible.

Waterfront Website

Louise confirmed that the previously outlined changes to the Practice website remain ongoing and could possibly come into effect in May. Following the update, the website should be accessible to anyone aged seven or above.

Prescription Ordering Direct Service (POD)

The Prescription Ordering Direct Service (POD) ended on 28th April 2023. Texts were being sent to those patients who appeared to have taken no action, referring them to the Practice website or NHS App. The Practice had noticed a 2% increase in online usage but are waiting to see the full impact of the POD's closure. Louise said that calls to the Practice had been monitored during March and at 5,075 showed a significant increase.

Calls will be closely monitored during April and May to determine whether they are increasing, if so, she will try to identify what categories the additional calls fall into and decide whether the Practice needs to do anything different. Currently the Waterfront has three members of staff answering calls between 8.00 am and 11.00 am. Jane asked if the POD closure would increase workload in areas other than call handling? Louise responded that the POD initially offered more services including a Pharmacist's review but recently its services had reduced to being a call centre processing prescription requests. NHS App requests would go into the GP queue.

PPG Patient Survey 2023

The 2023 NHS GP National Survey is still ongoing and the form remains inaccessible to non-survey participants so no comparison can be made for the 2023 PPG Patient Survey which ideally would 'mirror' the NHS survey. The 2023 results will be published in the summer. The PPG discussed in detail the issue of access to GP services which has been a major issue at local and national level over the past few years and will be a focus for the Integrated Care Board (ICB). It was agreed that the PPG Survey will be revised and reviewed at the next meeting.

PPG Waterfront March 2023 Newsletter

Louise confirmed that the latest newsletter is available on the website and copies are in the waiting room. She added that the Partners are very impressed with the content and quality of the newsletter. Chris S asked if a partner would be attending a future PPG. Louise said she would ask Dr Ratra if she could attend depending, of course, on work commitments on the scheduled day of the meeting.

Spring 2023 Covid Booster

Louise told the PPG that the Practice was waiting to hear what vaccine would be made available for the latest vaccination campaign. The housebound and Care Homes were scheduled to be the first recipients and then the over 75s. Chris B mentioned that Covid vaccinations were available at the Wordsley Community Centre.

Treasurer's Report

Joan confirmed that the PPG account remains in credit. Unfortunately, the West Bromwich Building Society where the funds are held no longer produce 3rd Party cheques.

Staffing Updates

Louise informed the meeting that Dr Austen officially leaves the Waterfront on 8th May 2023, however, for personal reasons he will continue - for a short period - as a locum and will be in the practice on Tuesdays in May to provide cover.

At the last GP Partners meeting it was agreed that the Practice needs another doctor, but that recruitment is a major problem both locally and nationally. Clive commented that the shortage of GPs was impacted by a significant number of GP Partners and salaried, locum and retainer GPs, retiring early as well as the Government cap on the number of training places. Given the workload and stress involved it is too surprising that GPs are retiring or reducing hours to improve their own health and 'work life' balance.

Louise reported that Leanne is settling in well to the role of Practice Secretary and is ably supported by Sharon.

Any Other Business

Louise is going to review the telephone system to establish the viability of amending the system to advise callers of their place in the queue and may be offering a callback option, depending upon the costs involved.

Louise discussed in general terms the financial pressures on practices such as the Waterfront and confirmed that some GP Practices are not replacing staff who leave as a cost-cutting measure. Louise also raised concerns about the cost of living rises on GP Practices especially in respect of energy costs.

Louise informed the meeting that:

1. the Practice is still waiting for the arrival of the new digital screen mentioned at the last PPG Meeting.
2. *Integrated and Care Board* (ICB) is coming to assess if the Waterfront is adhering to the GP Contract. The assessment will be undertaken by two Inspectors and will be a four-hour visit, looking at Human Resources Policies and other Policies and Procedures and talk to staff. The outcome will be a potential grade: the assessment is scheduled for the end of June 2023.
3. In addition to the GP Contract check there will be an Infection Control Audit to assess the infection control protocols in place at the Waterfront. There was some concern that the assessment tool being used was designed for hospitals and is unlikely to be appropriate for GP Practices. Louise has her own records which will complement the ICB audit.
4. Practices in Dudley are being asked to “walk with” a GP. The Waterfront Practice is not yet involved, but the walks will take place on a Wednesday or Thursday and the ones scheduled to date are:
 - 8th June 2023 – Dr Edwards from AW Surgery at the Delph Lock – 11.30 for an hour
 - 21st June 2023 – Bonded Warehouse
 - 19th July 2023 – Dr Robinson at the Bonded Warehouse

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m. on Thursday 15th June, 2023 at the Waterfront.