

Report of Committee to Patients, North Petherton PPG 2014/15.

Background

Many GP surgeries have a Patient Participation Group (PPG) which can take positive action to help the practice and the local population by promoting good health and giving patients a voice in designing and delivering healthcare services. Additionally they provide a focus for patients to pass on ideas and suggestions as well as collecting and giving out information to and from the wider practice population. (PPG's are NOT however a route for individual patient complaints).

We have our own North Petherton Patient Participation Group (North Petherton PPG) which was established in October 2011.

The membership of our group is, at present, quite small and we are still actively seeking new members to widen participation and broaden our influence and input to the practice. We are also encouraging patients to enrol in our NEW on-line group to enable their involvement and participation without the need to attend meetings!

Our Aims

'To promote by any appropriate means, the good health and wellbeing of patients of the North Petherton Surgery (the Practice).'

'To represent the collective interests of Practice patient's to other bodies inside and outside the NHS'.

Actions and Activities

We have participated fully in meetings of the Somerset PPG Chairs Group as well as attending meetings of the Bridgwater Bay Health Federation PPG.

The Chair, as well as other committee members, have again participated in a number of Patient and Public Involvement Pilots and workshops alongside representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with the aim of generating new ideas for commissioning services and support.

The most recent workshop attended was an Orthopaedic Clinical Pathway Review Patient Focus Group. This provided the group with the opportunity to offer thoughts and experiences of the current orthopaedic pathway as well as giving input on how the patient experience might be improved.

With regard to practice matters, and at a more local level, the Patient Group Committee has held six committee meetings since last year's AGM in February 2014.

The meetings have covered a wide range of areas and topics from practice updates (provided by the Practice Manager), Healthwatch, 111 and out of hours care, Care.data to Bridgwater Hospital, Tele-Dermatology and improving community services to name just a few.

Lively debate and participation has ensued and opportunities have been provided to feedback our thoughts and opinions.

Additionally we have had also had Guest Speakers attending three of these meetings. In April, Lucy Nicholls, Patient Experience Manager from the Somerset Partnership Trust explained how the Trust fitted into the NHS framework alongside the Acute Trusts of Yeovil and Musgrove Park. They are responsible for running a range of community services including mental health, a range of therapies and the community hospitals.

Our May meeting was preceded by an informative presentation from a guest speaker, Amanda Whitlock representing Independent Age which was followed by a question and answer session. Her presentation links with our initiative to work with existing providers to improve and encourage befriending services and reduce the isolation experienced by some patients. (See the brief section on Befriending / Isolation later in this report).

At our July meeting we invited two guest speakers, Jayne Nicholas, Project Manager, The Patients' Association provided information and leaflets explaining the work and role of the Association and this was followed by Steve Baker, Team Leader, Somerset Rural Youth Project who gave a talk about how we might improve our engagement with young people. We are particularly keen to involve younger patients in the work of the patient group as they are, at present, under-represented on the group.

Big Band Concert

On a lighter note a very successful Big Band Concert was held in May 2014 when more than 100 people attended the event held in the Community Centre. The music was provided by the Wessex Big Band and featured a selection of big band music from the 30's, 40's and 50's.

The event raised some much needed funding to support the future activities of the patient group including a contribution towards the production and distribution of a patient group newsletter.

Virtual Group / On-line Group

We have launched a 'Virtual Group', probably better titled an on-line or e-mail group, to broaden the reach and influence of our PPG. Further details regarding joining this group can be obtained by contacting our Practice Manager at the Surgery.

Befriending / Isolation

Despite our continuing efforts, to both promote activities and work with partners, to increase the support for patients experiencing isolation we have to report limited progress to date.

We are particularly keen to both identify and support those patients of the practice who are living alone and would welcome some additional contact and support. The evidence suggests that if the feelings of isolation and loneliness can be reduced this can contribute significantly to the health and well-being of the individual.

Whilst progress is slow we will continue to engage with other organisations and we hope that, in due course, this initiative can be further developed and that by offering friendship and contact we can make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of these patients.

This in turn, we hope, will help reduce dependency on medication and the need for as many visits to the surgery or doctor's appointments.

We intend to persevere with this initiative as we feel this can only help our practice, in the long term, and any volunteers to offer assistance would be most welcome. Please feel free to contact the Chair of the Patient Group if you would like more information or indeed if you would welcome any additional support personally.

National Association of Patient Participation

Our PPG has continued to be affiliated to NAPP who will be holding a National Patient Participation Group Awareness Week from June 1st – June 6th culminating in their Annual Conference in Leamington Spa on Saturday June 6th.

Walking for Health

The Chair has recently completed training and qualified as a Voluntary Walk Leader and we hope to launch a programme of short 30/40 minute walks around the practice geographic area starting in the spring 2015.

Walking for Health is encouraged and supported by the Macmillan Cancer Support charity and The Ramblers' Association, which is also a registered charity.

The walks are aimed at those recovering from illness and injury who want to socialise in a supportive environment. They are also suitable for families or anyone new to walking, the elderly and both the inactive and the active. The walks are intended for residents of our practice area to improve their fitness as well as providing an opportunity to socialise and meet other likeminded people. All will be welcome to join us irrespective of your age and present fitness level.

The times and dates of the walks will be displayed around the geographic practice area in due course. You do not necessarily have to be a patient of the North Petherton practice to come on a walk.

Newsletter

Our first newsletter is being launched in late March / early April and we hope to produce additional newsletters if there is sufficient interest and also subject to the costs involved.

Conclusion

One of our main roles is to influence the services available from our local practice and the wider NHS and to provide feedback from patients of the practice. In addition we are always seeking to support the practice staff, in any way that we can, to provide and maintain a high quality level of service and care in a time of challenging changes and funding issues.

Despite again making frequent changes to both the time and location of our meetings the attendance and participation of new members has been, to say the least, disappointing!

The dates of all our meetings for 2015 have been set in advance and we propose to use the same venue throughout the year, the ground floor meeting room at the Church Rooms, North Petherton.

Whilst we have tried to build on what was achieved last year our committee is still small in number and our progress is slow. We do however continue to learn as we progress and would welcome your feedback and suggestions regarding what you would like to see provided .

We do still need the support and involvement of more patients in order to provide a broader perspective and to widen the experience and views provided by the patient group.

We would particularly like to be more representative of all the age groups and interests of the practice patients and renewed efforts will be made during the next twelve months to increase our 'membership'. The only requirement is that you have an interest in either your health, or the health of your family, and that you are a patient of the North Petherton practice.

However, if you do not have time to attend and participate in meetings and activities please consider joining our on-line group and provide us with your views and opinions by e-mail. Additionally if you become part of our on-line group we can keep you informed of any activities as well as providing important information from the practice. Furthermore we may, from time-to-time, ask for your opinion or views on health related issues. (Further details are available from the Practice Manager at the Surgery or on the practice website).

Whilst 2014/15 has been a busy and active year for the PPG we are aware of the need to concentrate on more local issues affecting our practice whilst still maintaining an awareness and interest in the broader picture across the whole of Somerset and nationally.

We hope to play a more active role in supporting our practice with particular emphasis on local issues and interests. With this in mind we are constantly seeking to find ways of working more closely with the staff and patients of the Practice.

The Future

A range of possible interest areas and activities being considered for the future includes: -

- Befriending and Isolation Initiative - health impacts.
- Carers Tea Party.
- Pro-active lifestyle health events including Healthy Eating.
- Health Walk Group – local short walks for the less active or mobile.
- Further North Petherton PPG Newsletters.
- Strengthening our On-line Group.
- Question and Answer events.

The list is not exhaustive and any additional ideas, or specific requests, are most welcome!!

Malcolm Turner
Chair, North Petherton PPG.

March 2015.