

# **FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY PRACTICE**

## **Minutes of meeting on 16 November 2022**

Present: Mike Rudd (Chair), Barbara Britten, Graham Cundy, Hilary Gower, Malcolm Jefferies, Lynn McGrady, Jill Keen (Practice Manager), Dr Sanjeev Sekhon

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Sandra Shaw and Judy Chappell.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 27 July 2022**

The minutes were agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising**

- The gutters have now been cleared, following concerns raised at a previous meeting.
- The Practice has not yet been given a date for a review visit from the Care Quality Commission. The CQC seeks and analyses data prior to determining its inspection schedule and no causes for concern have been identified.

### **4. Health Centre Update**

#### a) Operational and Procedural Changes

The Practice's preferred method for appointment requests or advice is via the on-line (Footfall) system as it enables Reception staff to direct queries appropriately with doctors contacting patients where necessary. The phone number is still available for patients with no access to on-line facilities. Feedback indicates that many patients appreciate the on-line option as a face-to-face GP appointment is not always necessary and it also enables the GPs to focus on more complex issues. However patients are reporting excessively long wait times when phoning which impacts on the reputation of the Practice. This seems to be worse in the mornings when staff are focused on resolving on-line requests, as over 100 are received daily.

Members of the group are concerned that patients with minor symptoms may not obtain appointments and conditions may then escalate to serious levels. It's recognised that this is a wider, indeed national issue at this time. Ideally close monitoring of patients' symptoms and the provision of 'wellness clinics' are effective tools in early identification of serious illnesses.

Where appointments are not available within the Practice, staff are signposting patients to other services. The Extended Hours initiative introduced by North West Surrey Integrated Care Services (NICS) is providing St Johns Family Practice with approximately 34 appointments per week for patients unable to obtain a consultation within the Practice. Additionally, the Walk In Centre in Woking can provide consultations and undertake X rays – though group members mentioned long wait times and lack of parking as problems at the Woking site.

The Practice was initially notified that funding and therefore access by patients to the Livi app were to cease however, GPs' surgeries in the area are currently supporting the Extended Hours initiative and have restricted capacity to absorb increased consultations. Livi services will therefore continue to be centrally funded as an 'interim measure'. It is not known how long this support will continue.

The Reception area now has a machine which can record height, weight and blood pressure and provide electronic readings direct to patient records. In time, health questionnaires could be linked which would prove useful prior to COPD, diabetes, asthma and other review appointments.

An on-line booking system is expected shortly and although this will not facilitate GP appointments, other services (eg smears) could be arranged by patients.

Patients are currently asked to phone for their blood test results. From 1 November the NHS expects all patients to have access to their results via the NHS app. Though this has been available to some patients when requested and approved by the GPs, the Practice is to ensure this is now available to all. This may also reduce the volume of phone calls.

#### b) Staffing changes

Following Dr Richard's departure, a number of GP sessions have been covered by a Locum and extra sessions undertaken by other GPs within the Practice. An advert for an extra salaried GP is to be issued soon.

There are currently four nurses and two health care assistants. Chronic disease management, including asthma and diabetes reviews, are undertaken by the nurses.

The Practice now has a pharmacist able to manage the repeat prescription process and undertake medication reviews. It is not necessary for patients to seek an appointment for a medication review as they will be contacted should any changes or additional monitoring be recommended. Many local pharmacies are also signed up with the Surrey Heartlands Clinical Commissioning Group to offer consultations.

### **5. Public Transport /Other Issues associated with transfer of many St. Peter's Hospital services to Ashford**

The group has previously highlighted the transport difficulties for patients in this area resulting from the transfer of many outpatient appointments from St. Peter's to Ashford Hospital. Following much correspondence from members of this group to councils in the area, Jonathan Lord MP is now campaigning for a new direct bus service from the Woking area to Ashford Hospital and has issued a leaflet which has been circulated in many (though not all) local neighbourhoods.

Staff at the Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals Trust have apparently been asked to arrange appointments near patients' home addresses wherever possible and there has been a significant investment in Ophthalmology equipment at Woking Community Hospital. Patients given appointments at Ashford are therefore recommended to contact the Trust and seek a more local option. This group will continue to monitor developments.

### **6. Flu Vaccinations**

The annual flu vaccination programme is currently underway. Take-up within the Practice is relatively low but it's recognised that some patients are opting to receive the vaccine at the Covid vaccination centres or at local pharmacies. The Practice is issuing reminders to many patients. Hilary noted that the current Flu Vaccination Form on the on-line system still restricts appointments to over 65 year olds – whereas the NHS is publicising the flu vaccines for over 50s.

## **7. Patient Survey**

Prior to the Covid pandemic the group undertook periodic surveys to gather patients' views. Typically these would be taken over one week with members of the Friends group providing survey forms as patients arrived for appointments. However Covid has brought about changes in the methods by which many patients are interacting with health professionals – including on-line and telephone discussions. Accordingly, a new approach to the patient survey is needed which must be mindful of the need to ensure patient confidentiality. Although patient surveys are recommended, there appears to be no national or regional guidance on this issue.

One suggestion is to devise a survey which could be distributed to patients via a link in a text message. It was also suggested that information on the purpose of the survey and some context regarding the national direction of travel towards more on-line interactions could be notified to patients beforehand. Jill is to give more thought to the practicalities of this option and it will be discussed at the spring meeting of the group.

## **8. Any Other Business**

There are ongoing concerns with Rowlands Pharmacy (Numark) with limited deliveries and instances when specific medication is unavailable necessitating a new prescription request but no indication is given to the GP regarding the availability of any alternatives. A meeting set up some time ago to discuss various issues was cancelled by Rowlands. It was mentioned that many pharmacies currently have challenges in stocking certain medications. Increasingly, many of the patients in the Practice are now using alternative pharmacies, with Lloyds in Sainsburys and Pharmacy 2U currently very popular. The Practice was praised at the speed with which prescription requests were dealt with – the delays seeming to arise after that point.

Repeat medication is typically supplied for a 3 month period although this can be marginally longer if a patient is going away for a period. Specific controlled drugs require a one month prescription.

## **9. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be at 9:30am on Wednesday 18 January 2023 at St John's Family Practice.