

BRIDGEWATER SURGERIES PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The newly-merged PPG was formed in March 2018 when the following Committee members were elected: Russell Cleaver, John O'Connor, Carly Melbourne, Penny Allum, Phil Soskin and Denis Micallef. The Steering Group has since met on 4 occasions. During the year, the PPG has been supported by Lisa Mackin (Joint Practice Manager) and Dr Gowri Sankaran. John O'Connor has provided valuable admin support to the PPG and deserves our thanks.

THE WAY AHEAD

At its first meeting the Steering Group identified the following areas to focus on:

- Understanding merger challenges and opportunities identified by the Practice
- Ways to develop patient involvement and participation in Practice matters
- Address and suggest improvements to the Practice website, particularly regarding communicating with patients and extending information about PPG affairs
- Maintaining a strong presence with the main organisations comprising the local health network especially Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Group and the GP Practice Patients Group Network.
- Develop links with other local like-minded PPG's to our mutual advantage.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

Known locally as the Herts Help - Hospital & Community Navigation Service, this county-wide service is a means of enabling GPs, and other health care professionals to refer patients to a range of local, non-clinical services, via navigators. This helps avoid unnecessary appointments that consume GP and other clinical staff's time. Following a presentation to the Steering Committee about this service by Paul O'Hare (Programme Manager), Community Navigators have been attached to all three branches of the Surgery and 92 patients have been referred to them since the merger.

LINKS WITH OTHER LOCAL PPGs

To learn about successful experiences other local PPGs, the Steering Group invited Heather Aylward (Public Engagements Manager, Herts Valley CCG) to share her experiences and views on ways in which our PPG might develop, including how to attract more interest and participation in PPG affairs. As a spin-off, a useful session to share experiences was held with the chairs of Sheepcot and Manor View PPGs, both of whom have well-developed websites and have tested a range of activities including use of social media, newsletters, patient surveys, presentations and providing support to their Practice on request e.g. promoting flu clinics.

PATIENT SURVEY

With the merged Bridgewater Surgeries Practice almost 1 year old and the need for the PPG to raise its profile to attract more support, it seemed timely to consider seeking patient opinion on a range of questions in the form of a survey. Tapping into the Sheepcot model

which was kindly shared with us, a series of 10 questions was jointly prepared by the PPG and Practice, then tested as a pilot on 24 known registered patients, using the electronic Survey Monkey. The plan then was to roll out the survey to a total of 300 patients using 3 methods: Face to Face, GP Handout, and electronic Survey Monkey. This proved to be slightly over-ambitious – of the final 263 forms completed from the 3 Practice sites, most were obtained face-to-face by 4 PPG members. The electronic Survey Monkey requires more input but could be used for future surveys as the ground-work has now been carried out. The survey's results are currently being assessed and will provide valuable information for both the new PPG Committee and Practice management. Suffice to say at this stage that overall, Bridgewater Surgeries, based on the sample of active patients surveyed, is perceived as a provider of a high level of service. As for patient interest and support for the PPG itself, there was disappointingly little evidence of this, something the new Committee will need to address.

NETWORKING

The Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) organises and facilitates regular meetings within SW Herts to update PPGs and other interested health representatives, on current national and local NHS developments and initiatives. Post-merger, Bridgewater Surgeries is the largest practice in SW Herts and as such it is important that our PPG maintains and develops a high profile at these events. Fortunately, during the year, at least 2 of our members have been present at each session and have able to feed-back information to the Steering Group. In a fast-moving NHS world, this presence should continue to be a priority.

CONCLUSION

Just as this has been a challenging year for the newly-merged Practice, so it has been for the PPG. With its near-30,000 registered patients, the Practice deserves an effective, well-resourced PPG. There is no shortage of ideas and the Patients Survey results should serve as a platform for further debate and action. But there is still a big question mark as to whether there are the people out there able and willing to put in the time and effort to join the PPG, and working with the Practice, help make changes happen.

Report confirmed by the AGM on 3rd June 2019 and updated on 09 September 2019

Russell Cleaver.

Chairman.

Bridgewater Surgeries PPG, July 2019