

**Minutes of the Falkland Surgery Patient Participation Group
Annual General Meeting
held on Monday, 24th October 2022 at 19:00
at Falkland Surgery**

Committee Present: Adrian Barker,
Linda Ling
Bettine Bly,
Adrian Edwards
Pete Davies
John Curtis
Diana Mudge-Davies
Mark Betkowski (Practice Manager)

Apologies: Phil Barnett
Bob Hills

1. Welcome

Adrian Barker, PPG Chairman, welcomed all those present to the AGM and introduced the PPG Committee.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on 17th May 2021 were agreed as a correct record (proposed by Linda Ling and seconded by Bettine Bly).

3. Chair's Annual Report

Adrian thanked the PPG committee for their contributions collectively, in meetings, but also individually through various actions, over the last year and a half.

He also thanked Mark, the Practice Manager, the doctors and staff at the surgery for their support of the PPG but also for maintaining caring and professional services during a period which hadn't seen a return of demand and activity to pre-Covid levels.

He gave a brief review of **developments in the PPG** over this period:

- Committee back up to a full complement of 10. We would still like to find ways in which others who would like to, can contribute to the work of the PPG

- The number on our email list, receiving newsletters and other occasional communications has risen from 10 to 83, which allows feedback from a wider range of view.
- Communications have been put onto a more professional footing, using Mailchimp rather than a personal email account
- Three newsletters produced since the last AGM and thanks to John Curtis who has taken over producing and editing those
- Thanks to Linda who has put regular items in the Wash Commoner magazine
- Bettine has been instrumental in increasing our engagement with the community and particularly initiating and doing most of the work for our presence at the Wash Common Community Festival in September which was a good opportunity to listen to patients and encourage them to sign up to receive the newsletter. Thanks too, to Adrian Edwards and Linda Ling for their help throughout that day
- We have continued to monitor feedback: received directly and passed on to the surgery; comments online; and the national GP Patients' Survey. While satisfaction had picked up the previous year, it slipped back a little this time, but still, 69% were satisfied with the appointment they had been offered, a majority were able to see someone face to face and most of those were within a week.
- Three members of the Committee – Linda, Phil and I – spent a morning in the surgery seeing first hand how things work in the 'back office'

The National Context

We are currently seeing something of a revolution, nationally, going on in GP practices. This is part of a long-term aim within the NHS to move care out of hospitals and into communities; to increase the focus on prevention; and to join up services, both public and voluntary sector.

Practices have been encouraged to join together in 'Primary Care Networks', covering populations of 30-50,000, which international research has shown are more efficient and effective. We work with Burdwood and Thatcham practices in the 'Kennet PCN'.

A number of new roles have been funded nationally, including clinical pharmacists, physios and social prescribers.

Demand for GP services has continued to rise, with the number of appointments nationally going up from 23m to 25.9m between June 2019 and June 2022 (excluding Covid vaccinations).

The complexity of cases is also increasing because of an ageing population and developments in medical technology.

However, the number of GPs is not rising. According to the Science and Social Care Select Committee the number of fully qualified GPs fell by 717 full-time equivalents between March 2019 and March 2022.

Developments in the surgery

The PPG has received regular updates on what is happening in the surgery, both from the Practice Manager and GPs. Just a few of them are:

- A new team leader post has been appointed to help manage the work of the Patient Services Advisors
- The surgery is again looking at its appointment system (an ongoing task, as the world and technology change)
- In the year to July 2022, there had been 65,000 appointments (from a patient list size of 14,000) of which 68% were face-to-face. So, what you sometimes hear, on Facebook and from some newspapers, that you can't get a GP appointment, is simply not true.
- There is continual staff turnover and new posts being added, which adds to the tremendous pressure everyone at the surgery is under.

The future

Although the PPG can be proud of what it has done over the last year and a half, there is still much more we could do.

Arguably, now is the time to try and improve things more not less, but there is a paradox, nationally, that just when the NHS and GP practices need help most, is when they are too busy to organise and accept any help offered by volunteers. Also, though, we need to be realistic about how much can practically be done.

Nevertheless, the PPG will continue to try and find ways it can help the surgery of the next year.

4. Treasurer's Report

Bettine presented the Treasurer's report.

This report covered the financial activity of the PPG for financial year 06/04/2021 to 05/04/2022. There was also an update on the financial position of the PPG to date.

Bettine explained that she joined the PPG in December 2020 and was elected Treasurer on the same date. She has lived in Newbury all her life and has been with this Practice since the 1950's when it was situated in St John's Road. Whilst not a qualified Accountant, her entire working background was spent in Finance Departments, covering a wide range of accounting functions. She has been retired from paid work for several years.

Financial Year 06/04/2021 to 05/04/2022

Like all other Charitable Organisations, the PPG had suffered financially during the Covid pandemic, as we were only able to meet on Zoom. This year we have slowly been trying to attract more interest in the PPG activities and held a hybrid Open Evening in November 2021. Although it did not attract many patients/staff we were able to undertake our first fund raising effort since the start of the pandemic in 2019 and raised £29 at a raffle during the evening.

The Accounts were approved by Karen Hayward, the Deputy Practice Manager, and have been registered and acknowledged on the Charity Commission Website.

Financial Year 06/04/2022 to date

The Committee agreed that their first priority this year was to try and get more patients to sign up to receive the PPG newsletter and to receive occasional emails on latest updates at the surgery. We held a further hybrid open evening 9th May, 2022 and the raffle raised a further £22 to add to the PPG funds. We have also been permitted to put posters up on the Surgery Notice board again and have placed sign-up forms to receive the newsletter in the vestibule of the Surgery. This has resulted in a gradual increase in numbers of patients signing up to receive updates.

In September this year the Committee had a stand at the Wash Common Community Festival and ran a tombola which raised £102 in profits. The stand also gave us the opportunity to raise the profile of the PPG to patients of Falkland Surgery attending the Festival.

The PPG Fund balance currently stands at £682.54. We have incurred an expenditure charge against this balance of £8, not yet claimed. Patients were putting prescription requests in the PPG box despite there being a very specific notice on the box saying it was for PPG correspondence only. This resulted in a number of prescription requests not being processed daily, as the box is only opened on an ad hoc basis (usually every two weeks). The problem has now been resolved by purchasing another key to the box for the Surgery staff to access it on a daily basis. The charge for the key incurred a cost of £8.

5. Election of committee and officers

The re-election of the whole committee was proposed by Bettine Bly and seconded by Adrian Edwards. The existing members of the committee were duly elected, namely Adrian Barker, Bettine Bly, Linda Ling, Adrian Edwards, Phil Barnett, Bob Hills, John Curtis, Pete Davies, Diana Mudge-Davies and Mark Betkowski.

Linda Ling temporarily took over as chair. Adrian Barker was willing to stand and was proposed by Linda Ling and seconded by Bettine Bly. There were no other nominees and he was duly elected.

Linda Ling was proposed as Vice-Chair by Adrian Barker and seconded by Bettine Bly and was duly elected.

Bettine Bly was proposed as Treasurer by Adrian Barker, seconded by Linda Ling and was duly elected.

There were no nominations for the position of secretary. However Diana Mudge-Davies said she would consider taking the position once she had experienced a few more meetings.

6. Questions and Discussion

It was explained that in the past, funds have been used to buy equipment for the surgery such as examination couches, lights and blood pressure monitors. Mark explained how useful these items are. It was asked how we intended to raise more funds. At present it was through raffles, attending events and that sort of thing. Sometimes in the past grateful patients have made donations or left money in their will. Bettine noted that many events require payment for a stand. Linda said it is easier to raise money when there is something tangible for it to pay for. When we have another request from the surgery we will undertake fundraising to pay for it.

Dr Lorna Berry, who qualified last year, explained that she had been awarded a 'New to General Practice Fellowship'. This meant that funding would be provided to allow for continuing professional development, with the aim of retaining newly qualified doctors. She was hoping to pursue something, alongside the PPG, on combatting loneliness, as loneliness is bad for your health. She is currently gathering ideas of what would be useful. This could include producing a directory of local services or starting a new group for people to meet each other. She would welcome input into the work from patients at the practice. There were several contributions from the floor about what groups already operated locally. Many organisations are already listed on the Council's West Berkshire Directory. Mark also noted that software called 'Joy' had been bought for the social prescribers, which collates information about local organisations. Linda said that St George's Church was due to be operating as a 'warm hub', welcoming people in and more information on that would be available locally. Anyone with any further ideas could email falklandppg@gmail.com and they could then be passed on to Dr Berry.

7. Presentations and Discussions

Getting the most out of your Surgery - Linda Ling

Linda talked about how the world had moved on from the days when you could just turn up to the surgery and wait to see the GP. It had also moved on from a first-come-first-served approach, where all appointments were taken within minutes of phone lines being opened. She explained how the current approach worked, which includes:

- Triage – which is GPs prioritising who needs to be seen and when, based on the seriousness and urgency of their condition
- The eConsult form – which is used to collect information about symptoms and any particular requests (which might be, for instance, a request to see a particular GP). This is a validated and widely used tool within the NHS. While some of the questions might seem unrelated to your condition, it is designed to spot any 'red flags' which might indicate a need to be seen more urgently than by a GP. There are about 50 eConsults submitted every day, so about 250 a week. Every one is looked at by a GP.
- The surgery has a new website. This change was necessary because the previous one would no longer work with eConsult. EConsult can be found by clicking on the

'Appointments' button. Mark, the Practice Manager, said that feedback on the website would be welcome.

- Econsult is only available when the surgery is open, so any serious condition does not sit inadvertently on a form over the weekend without being looked at.
- For people who don't have access to, or don't feel comfortable with using, the internet, the Patient Services Advisors can fill it in for you, asking the necessary questions.
- The Patient Services Advisors are trained to help with general queries, to collect information about your health concerns and pass this on to the GPs who are the ones who make decisions about when you should be seen.
- It takes 6 weeks to train the Patients Services Advisors (the role is much more than that of 'receptionist') and it can be very stressful. Pay rates have been increased, because they were previously not competitive with, for instance, local supermarkets.
- In addition to the Patient Services Advisors on the front desk, there is a substantial team working upstairs, constantly answering phones, dealing with prescription requests, answering queries, handling messages from the hospital etc.
- If you have an urgent health concern and believe you should be seen on that day, you should ring the surgery.
- Patient Services Advisors can also help face-to-face with any queries you may have.
- Based on your condition, the GP will decide whether a phone call will meet your needs (and which may be more convenient for some people) or whether they need to see you face-to-face.
- As well as seeing a GP, there is a wide range of other services, which may be more appropriate in some circumstances. They include nurse-led clinics, minor surgery, specialist-led musculoskeletal clinics, pharmacist-led clinics and medication advice and support with equipment at home.
- Feedback to help improvement can be given directly to the surgery or through the Patients' Participation Group at falklandppg@gmail.com or by post to the post-box near reception.

Questions and discussion

- Q. Why can you no longer book appointments online?
- A. We are looking into this, but the way appointments are currently managed, they are not all timed – so the GP has some flexibility in how long someone will need to be seen – so there are not necessarily predefined slots you could be booked into. There are some 'routine' slots available for GPs to fill for less urgent appointments.
- Q. I used eConsult but it said it couldn't help me and told me to ring the surgery instead
- A. It is based on an algorithm, which can be a little risk averse, and over which we have no control. However, this reduces the risk of something serious slipping through the net
- Q. when I type in Falkland Surgery, it no longer brings up your website, but rather a general NHS one
- A. You can still get directly to the surgery website by typing in: www.falklandsurgery.co.uk

Leg Ulcers and looking after your skin – Sally Seager

Sally described her background which included dealing with wounds, ulcers and the skin more generally. There is a lot you can do yourself to look after your skin.

There are some surprising facts about the skin:

- The skin is the largest organ in the body
- The skin: protects you; controls temperature; provides the senses of touch and temperature; excretes urea and salts
- The skin is 16% of body mass.
- If spread out it would cover 20 square metres
- It weighs about 4kg
- It renews every 35 days
- You lose about 40,000 skin cells every minute

Many of the problems with skin arise from blood circulation:

- Being further from the heart, it is harder to get blood circulating to the legs and back
- Sitting hinders circulation
- Walking gets circulation going
- Veins (which return blood to the heart) have valves to stop the blood going back in the wrong direction, but as we age, they don't work so well.
- If that can be corrected, you get better circulation which takes more nutrients round the body and helps wounds heal better
- Supports – such as stockings, a wrap or bandage – supports the leg and enables the muscle, as it contracts, to work better

Other things that can help leg health, whether for ulcers, swollen ankles or varicose veins, include:

- Maintaining a healthy weight and having a healthy lifestyle
- Not smoking
- Not sitting for too long
- If you have to sit, do seated exercises like lifting and pointing the foot
- Moisturising the skin
- Using devices like support stockings

The Cost of Living Crisis and your health – Adrian Barker

Given the time, this item was postponed to a future meeting.

This, and Linda's presentation, will be posted onto the PPG website:

www.falklandppg.org.uk.