

Note of Falkland PPG Open Evening 24th April 2023

1. Welcome and introduction

Adrian Barker introduced himself as the Chair of the Falkland Patient Participation Group (PPG) and welcomed everyone to the event.

He explained that the GP contract requires them to have a PPG and its main purposes are to provide feedback from patients to the surgery, to keep patients informed and to raise money for equipment for the surgery to improve patients' experience.

He noted that general practice continues to go through a period of great change. There are more staff in GP surgeries now, with roles including pharmacists, physiotherapists, social prescribers and others. There is a greater use of technology, such as the econsult form as the main way of making contact with the surgery. Nationally there is also a gradual move from care in hospitals to the community and a greater focus on prevention, to stop people becoming ill in the first place.

The PPG is keen to make contact with more people and raise funds and will be at the:

- Highclere fete – 10th June, 12-5pm.
- Wash Common Community Festival – 9th September, 1pm-5pm

If you are not already, you can sign up to receive PPG emails and the newsletter by emailing falklandppg@gmail.com. Tell your friends and family too!

2. Surgery update

Mark Betkowski, the Practice Manager, presented a range of statistics from a new monitoring system showing the extent of the demand on the practice and the way they were dealing with it.

In the last three months, 27,202 appointments had been offered, of which 23,248 had been booked, with 22,661 attendances. Of those, 18,697 were appointments offered with GPs, which led to 15,766 attendances. All of this is from a list of 14,015 registered patients.

While this is an average of much more than one patient every three months, clearly it is not evenly spread amongst patients and some need to see the doctor much more often than others. In particular, long term conditions are much more common among older people.

Contrary to the impression given by some newspapers, 59% of those contacting the surgery were seen on the same day. The average time to be

seen was four days. And the average time spent in the waiting room was five minutes.

3. Prescriptions

Prescriptions are a huge and complex task for the surgery. The number of prescriptions issued in the last three months was 63,645 (an average of over four per registered patient). Training for Patient Services Advisers (the new name for 'receptionists', to reflect the complexity of the work they do) to work on prescriptions takes six to eight weeks.

There are a number of different types of prescriptions, the main ones being:

- One-off
- "Repeat", where the prescription is for a month at a time
- "Repeat dispensing" or "batch", where the prescription is for six months of medication, which is picked up every month from the pharmacy.

There are three ways of ordering a prescription:

- Online through the NHS app (or Patient Access which links to the same information), or the surgery website (no login required)
- From the front desk at the surgery
- Through the pharmacy

The recommended way, if possible is through the NHS App, as this allows you to track progress.

(It was noted that each person needs to have their own, individual log-in to the NHS app, with their own email address.)

It is not possible to take requests for repeat prescriptions over the phone because it is not medically-legally considered safe.

A new prescription should be requested 7-10 days before it is due to run out (it is not possible to do it more than 10 days in advance).

You can request a new batch prescription or a medication review on the website here:

<https://www.falklandsurgery.co.uk/new-batch-prescription-medication-review>.

If your regular prescriptions are not already on a batch basis and you would like them to be, you can come into the surgery to ask, or message the surgery to request this. You can do that in the Contact Us tab at the top of the website, then scroll down and choose 'Contact the Practice' (<https://www.falklandsurgery.co.uk/contact>).

At the end of a batch (usually once a year) there will be a need for a medication review. When you get to the fifth out of the six months of your batch, you should be automatically contacted by the surgery if a medication

review is needed. You will need to complete a medication review form, either online or handed in to the surgery. Until the medication review has been completed, you will need to order your prescriptions monthly.

One of the most important parts of the medication review is for patients to take their blood pressure. They can do this at home, if they have a monitor, or in the 'pod' at the surgery. If necessary, a nurse can take their blood pressure.

It was noted that there are significant problems with pharmacies at the moment, particularly because it is hard to recruit the necessary staff.

It is possible to change your nominated pharmacy. This could be to another pharmacy locally or to an online-only pharmacy who will post your medication to you (the latter can't be done through the NHS app, only directly with the online pharmacy). You cannot change your nominated pharmacy in the middle of a batch.

Even if a prescription has been made by a consultant at the hospital, and can't be changed without their authorisation, the continuing prescriptions still have to come via the surgery. The hospitals do not have access to the electronic prescribing system, but this arrangement is also sometimes because the GP has a role in monitoring the patient. There is a lot of work going on to improve the way hospitals and GPs work with each other, including hospitals having more access to GP records.

4. Other issues raised

The surgery is not offering Covid jabs but they can be obtained from some pharmacies. If you need any help with Covid vaccinations you can call the NHS 119 service. Walk-in vaccination sites can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site>

The GPs do still do house calls in appropriate circumstances. There are also two nurses making house calls.

There were questions about being phoned back after submitting an econsult and what happens if you are not available, such as in a business meeting. Dr Tallini said that this was an issues they had recognised and it had been addressed in the January refresh of the appointment system. Patients will be given a time at which they will be called (it might not be absolutely spot on the time if the GP is tied up with someone else). If the GP can't get through, they will generally try two or three times (this will be more quickly the more urgent the situation is). They will also send a text saying they intend to call at a particular time.

There were questions about where things were going with general practice, whether they would get larger and if more would be done in Primary Care Networks (or PCNs – these are groups of practices. In our case we are

grouped with Burdwood and Thatcham in what is called the Kennet PCN.). It was thought that PCNs would stay, as much funding is fuelled through them. The idea of them offering economies of scale, in being bigger units covering populations of 30-50,000 did not seem to be materialising though. This was partly because the different practices had their own systems and processes which made joint working difficult.

Many of the problems facing GP practices locally arose from national decisions and particularly the lack of workforce planning, with more new doctors now coming from outside the UK than within.