

PONTELAND MEDICALGROUP

PATIENT FORUM

Monday, 1st September, 2008
Ponteland Primary Care Centre

Notes of Meeting

Present: Mrs. Janet Boakes (Practice Manager), Dr. Mark McCaldin (Partner), Sister Helen Baty (Senior Practice Nurse), Mrs. Shirley Hill, Mr. Colin Scott, Mrs. Joan Hentze, Mr Alfred Rutherford, Sarah Lamb (Trainee Secretary), Gillian McMullen (Senior Receptionist)

Apologies: None

Notes from last Meeting: Agreed as accurate

Matters Arising:

Extended Hours: Janet reported that the proposal for extending opening hours by providing two evening surgeries (Monday and Thursday) had been accepted by Northumberland Care Trust and these had started in August. Janet further commented that although it was early days it was disappointing to find that there were patients failing to attend these appointments. The government initiative was intended to offer access to patients who find it difficult to attend during normal opening hours; however, it appeared that some patients coming to these surgeries could have booked in to day-time surgeries. All patients attending the evening surgeries were being asked why they had booked in to these, and Janet would collate the responses and share these at the next Forum.

The practice is working on a system to remind patients by text about appointments and is currently collecting mobile phone numbers. It was anticipated that this would be launched in October. Janet thought that it may be worthwhile ringing patients with evening appointments to remind them, and would discuss this with the Reception team.

Dinnington Developments: Janet reported that the practice continues to work closely with Northumberland Care Trust to develop new premises. In the short term it may be possible to work in partnership with the Library Services and share accommodation and services. The application by *Teamcare Northeast* to open a Pharmacy in Dinnington was due to be considered at the next Pharmacy Committee.

Practice Based Commissioning: Mark reported that the Commissioning Plan was under constant review, although one of the intentions to commission community nursing services would be given less priority over the coming year.

New Business: A free discussion took place regarding the role and responsibilities of Forum members, and the aims and objectives of the group. It was agreed that the purpose of the group was to offer a patient perspective of the services offered by the practice, and nothing more. It was felt that over the previous two years too much consideration had been given to high level (often government led) initiatives, and what really mattered to patients were the day-to-day issues regarding running the practice. Shirley gave an example of difficulties in accessing podiatry appointments, which was the sort of issue that really mattered to patients.

Janet asked if she may email Forum members between meetings if there were operational issues that she would like the group's perspective on.

General Practice Assessment Questionnaire: Janet made a copy of last year's questionnaire available to the group and asked about changing the 'additional questions' which had been added in the previous year. In view of the discussion about the group's purpose, Janet thought that this year it might be worthwhile adding extra questions to raise awareness about the Forum. Janet asked for ideas from the group members about the sort of questions to be asked.

Rapid Access Clinic: Janet shared with the group the increasing numbers of patients who were ringing the practice to ask which doctors were working in the Rapid Access Clinic on certain days. It was felt that these patients were using this information to access certain doctors, which was against the principles of the service which had been established to give patients swift access to medical care. The group all felt that this was fundamentally wrong, and Janet stated that this was to be discussed at the quarterly Significant Event Meeting in the practice the following day.

Any Other Business:

Magazine: Janet reported that the autumn edition of the Practice Magazine was about to go to the Printer and would be delivered to all households in Ponteland, Dinnington and surrounding areas at the end of September.

Automated Attendant: Helen asked if any of the group had experienced, or had heard of others experiencing, problems with the 'Automated Attendant' in the waiting area (which allows patients to book themselves in for appointments). It appears that this computer does not accurately reflect the waiting times for patients, which can cause some confusion. Helen/Janet would discuss this at the Significant Event Meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday, 24th November, 2008