

Waterfront Patients Participation Group Meeting

Thursday 20th March, 2025: 11.00 – 12.15 pm

Attendees:

- Louise Bunce, Practice Manager
- Joan Allen, Treasurer
- Clive Spicer
- Chris Swaites
- Chris Beddall
- Jane Spicer
- Sylvia Swaites

Apologies

- Dawn Fellows

Matters Arising

Karina Lloyd - Black Country AAA Screening Programme Manager

Louise advised that there were no further updates.

Triage Assessment (Dr Chung – GP update)

As outlined and agreed at the previous PPG Meeting, Louise had visited AW Surgeries to establish how the triage approach works there and to determine if it would be a viable process to adopt at the Waterfront. AW Surgeries is a large practice which has 15 doctors and is able to dedicate one GP exclusively to managing triage. Louise concluded that the Waterfront does not have the capacity to move to the approach used by AW Surgeries even though it has resulted in a significant reduction in phone calls for the practice.

That said, something needs to be done to try to address the problems of meeting patients' needs so a trial plan has been devised which will begin on 1st April 2025 and will involve three colleagues answering the phones. The system will be:

1. The starting point for all call responses will be "What is the problem?"
2. Review lists to determine what can be done about the problem, for example: can a pharmacist deal safely with this issue?
3. If an appointment is required establish if one is available and allocate if possible.
4. If no appointment is available ask the patient to complete the online appointment form.
5. If the patient does not have internet access or feels unable to do so then the receptionist will complete on behalf of the patient.
6. Triage will then take place with an outcome given to patients within 48 hours.

A lengthy discussion then took place. Clive said that he had used the online form over the past year and found it very useful and that the surgery had almost always responded in an appropriate time: quickly if necessary or by midday if less urgent. A number of concerns were raised – not everyone has internet access or the literacy skills to complete the forms in enough detail to be useful for accurate screening. For some there may be neurological access barriers. Clive initiated a debate about the challenge that patients or a carer may face when trying to detail medical history involving serious symptoms either online or over the phone. A sympathetic and well-trained listener is needed to try to ensure that an accurate, sufficiently detailed report is given of a patient's health issues or problems.

Louise concluded that the practice will trial the process and see how well it works. She will send a communication out to patients detailing the new system and encouraging the use of the online form. It is hoped that this may improve the DNA figures. A review will be conducted after a month.

Did Not Attend (DNA) Review

Louise reported that she had run an APEX snapshot from 1st January 2025 to analyse the DNAs. Between 1st January and the day of the PPG meeting there had been 239 DNAs. The report analyses DNAs by time, hours and day and showed that Monday morning is a key factor. Patients who book more than two weeks in advance are most likely not to attend and notify the practice that the appointment is no longer needed. Chris B asked whether any specific age groups were evident? Louise commented that it tends to be younger patients: women in the age range 40-44. As it stands: 1 in 22 appointments are missed which equates to 154 appointments at a cost of £4,500. Louise will be reviewing the data on a regular basis.

Waterfront Website

Louise confirmed that there have been no updates on the website. The Waterfront Practice has a Facebook page which a digital company are now going to control and manage.

NHS Patient Survey and PPG Patient Survey 2025

As agreed at the last meeting Jane had prepared a draft form for the 2025 Waterfront PPG Patient Survey. She took the meeting through possible changes and the revised format was agreed. She will produce a final version to be 'signed off' at the next meeting. It was agreed that it would be run on-line at first and this approach would be reviewed at a later meeting to determine if any changes need to be made.

Treasurer's Report

Joan (Treasurer) reported that has been no expenditure since the last meeting. She has received a letter from the West Brom where the funds are invested to advise in a reduction in the interest rate payable on the account.

Waterfront Surgery Staffing Updates

Louise informed the meeting that Rebecca Price, the new Practice Nurse, started at the Waterfront on the 16th March 2025. For her first two weeks she will be working with Roseanna to acclimatise to her new role. She has already completed two courses and Louise is trying to establish at what point after completing a module she will be able to use the certified skills at the practice.

The Mental Health Nurse provided by the Primary Care network (PCN) will be working at the Waterfront for two days per week which will be very helpful in addressing mental health needs of patients.

Any Other Business

NHS England Improvement of Online Communications for Patients.

Louise referred to NHS England being disbanded and highlighted the uncertainty of the impact on initiatives that the practice has been running.

Inspection Visits

Louise confirmed that there were no updates on any possible Inspection visits.

Friends and Family Test

The Friends and Family Test results continue to be very positive.

Autumn Campaign - Flu and Covid Vaccinations

There were no updates on the 2025/2026 Autumn Campaign.

Pharmacy Services

Louise highlighted problems with access to local pharmacies which had been experienced by some Waterfront patients.

Rejected Prescriptions

Louise confirmed that she had reviewed the procedure for notifying patients if a GP rejects a prescription with reception and admin staff following the previous PPG Meeting.

Primary Care Network (PCN) PPG Meeting

Louise, Chris and Sylvia had attended the PCN PPG meeting on 27th February at the Brockmoor Community Centre. Chris and Sylvia had not found it very useful because the majority of attendees had been Practice Managers rather than PPG members. 'Jim the IT' man from "just straighttalk.org" had attended and it was agreed that Louise would invite him to the practice to speak to the PPG.

The meeting then discussed the concept of a PCN PPG and concluded that it was not practical. Clive noted that the social demographic of practices varies significantly in the Brierley Hill and Amblecote PCN and that the Waterfront PPG is particularly focused on trying to support patients from the second most deprived area in the country. One of the key aspects of the Waterfront PPG is that although small in membership it does its best to represent and provide a 'voice' for all patients who are on the list. Meetings are committed to improving the quality of healthcare for all patients and strive to be aware of all communities, genders, ages, ethnicities and disabilities. Clive noted that it was to the Waterfront Practice's credit that when so many surgeries appear to be making contact difficult for patients that it remained accessible by phone, on-line forms and emails, or walking in to speak to someone on reception.

Black Country Foodbank Donation.

Chris and Sylvia updated the PPG about the change in clientele at the Black Country Food Bank and the increased need for dried pulses rather than the tinned versions.

NHS App

As part of the ongoing PPG review of the effectiveness of the NHS App, Joan and Sylvia updated the meeting on their experience of accessing and managing their healthcare through the App.

Prescription Review

Medication Reviews are an important service to ensure that a patient's long-term medication remains appropriate, that there are no side effects or unusual symptoms etc. It also offers the patient an opportunity to raise any possible questions or concerns about their medication. Joan related that her recent telephone prescription review with Jeetinder was 'absolutely perfect.'

Next Meeting

The next two meetings are both scheduled for 11.00 am on Thursday 1st May, 2025 and Thursday 21st May 2025.