

MERSEA ISLAND MEDICAL PRACTICE  
PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

Minutes for the meeting on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 5.30pm  
On Zoom

Attending:

Maureen Phillips – Chairman	Malcolm Ede	Barbara Peter
John Akker	Sarah Hurley	Linda Westley
Jenny Chalklin	Teresa Manning	Martin Westley
David Cooper	Alan Mogridge	Su Rhys Jones – Secretary
Ian Crossley	Elizabeth Morgan	

Apologies: Kathy Bowman, Richard Russell-Grant and Jayne Taylor

Guests: Tracy Allen, Associate Alliance Transformation Lead, SNEE  
Kris Culmer, Operations Manager, MIMP

Maureen welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the year. There would be a slight change to the Agenda as Kris has been ill and asked to speak first.

### Practice Update

Kris began by wishing everyone Happy New Year and saying that the Christmas period had been remarkably busy, with GPs, nurses and reception staff away with Covid, winter flu and other bugs, making the Practice shorthanded. There were no current vacancies, with the Practice now fully staffed. Kris said she was still trying to find a COPD training course for Nurse Karen Mears.

The Partners have decided to return to the pre Covid system of not accepting telephone applications for repeat prescriptions. It would now be necessary to request repeat medication by using the NHS App, using a computer online with Patient Access/Emis and by completing the prescription form and placing it in the box in the Practice Foyer. Kris explained that she was looking in to a locked mailbox to be put on the outside wall of the surgery. This would be a benefit for working patients who needed to drop in scripts after hours. Kris reminded patients that there is still 48hours needed to get the request to the Pharmacy.

Kris explained that 70% of the telephone calls during the day were for repeat prescriptions. By removing this, she said that patients telephoning them for other reasons should have to wait less time to speak to a receptionist. It was also thought that the over ordering of medicines would decrease with the new system. Ordering on the telephone encouraged some to say they needed every medication listed, when in fact they only needed some. The current amount of stockpiled medication in some patient's homes was high and could be dangerous, as well as representing a cost to the NHS.

A patient asked about the box in the Foyer and Kris assured the Group that this would always be there and patients did not need to join the queue to speak to a receptionist. The Practice felt that going back to this system would benefit all patients. A patient asked about the housebound and if she knew how many patients would find the new system difficult. Kris said she did not know the number but felt that the number of patients with no family, friends or carers would be very small. Kris asked if the PPG could arrange for volunteers to collect scripts and drop them at the surgery. Maureen said that she was hoping to set up a list of volunteers in the future and she hoped the PPG would be able to help. Kris said that she was aware of the Guardian Angels on the Island and hoped they would be able to help. Kris assured patients that no one would be left without their medication. The new system will come in to place on the 1<sup>st</sup> February and Kris asked the PPG to help make this known to Islanders. Kris said that telephone callers were being told of the changes, there were posters in the surgery and on the website.

A patient asked about removing an item from their prescription. Kris explained that this can only be done in consultation with the GP. The patient said that the GP had agreed, but the item remained on the script. Kris recommended them to telephone the Practice.

A patient asked about the effect of the Doctor's strike on the Practice. Kris said the main problem had been that doctors were not required to give notice of joining the strike and could let the Practice know on the day. She thought one of the Registrars had been away on strike, however, team at the Practice worked well together and keen to keep disruption to a minimum. Absences caused extra work not just for the GPs but also the nurses and administration team. The strike had caused disruption to secondary care but most of the specialist teams had contacted patients to let them know of changes to their Clinics. Those patients waiting for diagnosis were the most affected.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> December to the 3<sup>rd</sup> January there had been 1,700 face to face and telephone appointments with GPs. There were also a large number of clinics and nurse appointments including diabetes, learning difficulty, health checks, phlebotomy, etc. There had been no DNAs. A patient remarked that the Colte (9 GP Practices) website showed a total of 1,500+ patients who failed to attend. Kris confirmed that nurse appointments can be booked in advance and there were a small number of DNAs there. Surprisingly there had also been a few DNAs for GP appointments, despite only booking it hours before. There had been no complaints and the staff had received lots of biscuits and chocolates over Christmas.

Kris asked Maureen to check the PPG Noticeboard for out-of-date information. Maureen said that most of the information was giving dates for the year and contact information but she would check this during the week.

A patient asked what arrangements were in place for when Emma Gamble goes part time. The patient said that Emma's work is vital for patients and adds kudos to the Practice for the care she gives. Kris said that Emma would continue to do visits on Mondays and Tuesdays but the Practice would need to have another person. Nothing had been decided yet. A patient asked if this could be included in the Practice Update in March and Kris agreed.

A patient reported that Bernard Jenkin MP had been discussing his visit with the new Health Minister recently and had mentioned the Mersea problems. Maureen said she would write to the MP and ask for an update.

Maureen thanked Kris for her Update and hoped she would soon feel better.

### **Ageing Well and Falls Prevention Presentation**

Maureen introduced Tracy Allen and after a brief IT hiccup, Tracy was able to share her screen to allow everyone to see the presentation. Tracy said that there had been a Frailty Workshop where various discussions had taken place on some of the alarming statistics. 1 in 5 of local patients are over sixty-five and this is due to rise to 1 in 4. 1 in 3 over sixty-five had had a fall but 50% of the over eighty patients had fallen, with 64% of these patients needing hospital care. A digital copy of The Practical Guide to help you age well in Colchester and Tendring had been circulated to members in December.

The advice will be familiar to many but this will remind people to get active, stay connected and to watch your diet was discussed. Patients who stopped smoking, at any age, will find many benefits including circulation and energy levels. Much of the advice is self-evident such as making sure vaccinations and routine screenings are up to date, but others, such as dental health was a surprise. There was a discussion on medication and the importance of the annual Health Check.

Keeping the home safe was an important way of reducing falls, ensuring the space around you is not cluttered, many people fall over their pets so putting on a bright collar or bell may help,

replacing worn out slippers by contacting Community360 (01206 505250) for the slipper exchange. There was a discussion on the numerous services offered free of charge by the Fire Service, including smoke alarms, safety and security advice, as well as support on how to reduce the risk of falls. Tracy also recommended contacting the GP Care Advisor at the Practice, requesting a support visit from the Community Agents Essex or the Social Prescribing Link Worker (our excellent speak at our last meeting).

There are practical things to do to stay safe through the winter, from taking care with icy pavements by wearing shoes and boots with a good grip on the soles, having grab handles fitted by the front door, keeping some food supplies in the cupboard or freezer for days when you cannot get out. A properly stocked medicine cabinet is important to have cold, flu and sore throat remedies easy to get. During the summer the most common cause for a fall is dehydration and the booklet explains that you should be drinking around 8 cups of water a day.

Mental health was also mentioned, this had been evident during Covid but many of the elderly are still struggling. The booklet suggested getting involved in local community events, such as the Memory Café's monthly coffee morning, which will give you time to chat. Having a plan to do something every day, small things to look forward to doing, talking and meeting up with friends all help keep your wellbeing and mental health better. There are links for end of life, wills, etc., given at the end of the leaflet and patients are encouraged to have these discussions with family and friends. Help after bereavement is listed, from support to what has to be done and who must be contacted following a death.

Tracy urged people to contact the Digital Access Support Team (01206 282452) to get help to be able to call friends and family using IT as well as being able to access health care and ordering repeat medication.

There is Passport: This is Me that is useful for people with dementia. It is completed by the patient and details how the patient wants to be treated and means the patient is having to say the same thing repeatedly.

Tracy explained that through the winter GP Practices will have a poster of a squirrel promoting winter wellbeing. F is for Friendly, A for Alarms and charging your mobile, L for Lively, activity, L is for Look where you are going and for walking aids and S is for Shoes and slippers. Tracy suggested keeping the booklet to hand as not all the chapters will be relevant now but may in the future. After each chapter there is a place to make notes.

Maureen said she had a supply of hard copies and Su had circulated the .pdf digital copy. Anyone wanting copies, please contact us.

Maureen thanked Tracy for her informative presentation and said she had given everyone a lot to think about. A patient thanked Tracy for the excellent booklet's Directory of Contacts at the end, eight pages of particularly useful information, with telephone numbers, email addresses and websites, as well as a brief outline of what each organisation offered.

The meeting then returned to the agenda.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no new Declarations.

### **Minutes**

The November minutes were agreed.

## **PPG Update**

Maureen said that in early November she had attended a project group meeting of PPG chairs and GP Training Institute to develop health webinars. There are many out there but they're all funded by pharma companies and carry a lot of advertising. The group are keen to focus on health topics. The GP involved thinks he will be able to persuade Consultants to give their time free of charge so it will just be production costs that will need funding.

Maureen said that she had attended a meeting with Olivia Rigo, Lead Support for PPG development at SNEE, to set up a group that can share best practices. Unfortunately, there are not that many active PPGs, especially in northeast Essex. Many of the PPGs shut down during Covid and have been slow to get started again.

Maureen said that she had been asked to take part in a Department of Health initiative to promote PPGs across the UK.

Maureen said that she had attended webinars on the new roles in GP practices, such as Practice Managers, Reception staff, and found it interesting. Both the Patient Association and SNEE had provided webinars.

Maureen said that she had had training on MS Forms to develop a Survey for PPG members. This is to ask how much, how little involvement, what topics would be interesting, what type of meetings were preferred, etc. This should be ready to send out in the next couple of weeks. It will be sent out by email, it is very simple to complete, if there are 2 people, they can complete the form twice, it does not ask for any personal data and when completed it will ask if you want to save and send. The software does all the processing.

Maureen confirmed that the PPG noticeboard is up and has the meeting dates and other information. The PPG Suggestions box is in the Surgery.

Maureen said that she had drawn up a strategy document and was focusing on how to make the PPG more representative of the Island's population. Getting younger people involved will be difficult as they are usually well but the PPG did need to work on increasing membership.

Maureen explained that the next meeting, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March, at 5.30 pm, at the Mersea Community Support Hall, Melrose Road, will be an Annual General Meeting. She planned to give a round up of 2023 and to share with the Group the plans for 2024.

Maureen asked the Group if they liked having a speaker at the meetings and asked if anyone had a specific topic they would be interested in hearing. There was no reply. Maureen said that she was hoping to arrange a Diabetes talk with Hilary and a GP had agreed to give a talk on Childhood Illnesses and having a paediatric medicine cabinet, both later in this year.

Maureen said that looking at the Action Tracker she can confirm that the software for completing the online request for a doctor's appointment has been amended. Extra time has been given to prevent the slot being taken while you are still typing.

Maureen said that she had attended the Memory Café as mentioned in the Action Tracker and was still looking for a volunteer to help with the opening and closing of this.

Maureen answered a question about the NHS App and said that often the problem in completing the registration process is that authorisation from the Practice is needed. She suggested asking a receptionist for this.

Maureen asked if anyone had 3 things they would like the PPG to achieve in the coming year. There was no response.

A patient asked what plans were being made at the Practice for when GPs retired. The media is saying how much pressure the doctors are under and how many are leaving the profession.

It was explained that when the Surgery was built, in 1978, it was in part to make it easier to attract GPs as there is no capital outlay on premises. This allows our Practice to choose the best doctor, not the one wealthy enough to buy in. The Government is talking of new rules that all GPs will be salaried NHS employees but this would involve the NHS in having to buy out existing surgeries where the doctors owned the premises.

The meeting closed at 6.55pm

The next meeting is **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March at 5.30pm**. The meeting will be held at the **Mersea Community Support Hall, Melrose Road**.