Patient Participation Group (PPG) Meeting 8/7/2025 - Minutes

1. Attended and Apologies

Mark Richardson (Chair), Janak Chauhan (Practice Manager), Barbara Loman, Andy Cheng, David Bowden, Sue Barton, Ray Robinson

Apologies were received from Andrew Pascoe and Barry Eliades.

2. Practice Updates

2.1 Staffing Developments

- A new salaried GP has been appointed and is expected to join in early to mid-August. She will be working six sessions per week (equivalent to three days).
- A new lead nurse joined on 6th May and has integrated well into the team.
- The nursing team remains strong with:
    - A Nurse Practitioner
    - Two practice nurses - one 2 days/week and one 4 days/week
    - Two healthcare assistants focusing on long-term condition reviews
    - A full-time phlebotomist has been appointed and will commence work the following week, improving blood test service availability and reducing pressure on healthcare assistants.
- Recruitment of two full-time and one part-time receptionists is complete, allowing existing reception staff to take on additional administrative responsibilities.

2.2 Patient Numbers

- Patient registration stands at approximately 12,700, with plans to expand to over 13,000 in light of increased staffing capacity.
- Growth has been supported by a streamlined online registration system, which eliminates the need for paper forms.

2.3 Appointments System

- The current system balances book-on-the-day and pre-bookable appointments.
- Five-week waiting times for pre-booked appointments were reported. The additional GP is expected to reduce this delay.

- Weekend appointments continue to be available through the Brighton and Hove Federation service, delivered at various sites across the city.

3. Appointment Demand and Triage Discussion

3.1 Total Triage System Overview

- The practice is considering a move toward a total triage system, where all patient requests are submitted via an online form reviewed by a GP.
- The GP would determine the appropriate response:
- Face-to-face consultation
- Telephone consultation
- Advice or redirection to another service
- Patients unable to use the online system may still phone the practice; reception staff would complete the form on their behalf.
- The current triage process involves receptionists collecting basic information and allocating appointments or escalating to the duty GP when necessary.

3.2 Concerns Raised by Patients

- Digital exclusion: concerns over access for older patients, those with disabilities, or those without internet access.
- Loss of personal interaction: patients value the ability to speak directly with a receptionist.
- Exceptions handling: How will the system support those with specific needs (e.g. autistic patients, full-time carers)?
- Clarity on process: Questions about timing, prioritisation, feedback loops, and how urgency is assessed.

3.3 Patient Feedback and Suggestions

- Consider a trial period before full implementation.
- Use a patient survey to gather opinions and assess readiness.
- Implement flagging mechanisms for patients with special circumstances.
- Ensure the triage process maintains the human touch, and allows for patient choice where possible.

4. Collaboration with Primary Care Network (PCN)

- The practice works actively with the PCN to deliver:
    - Care home and frailty services
    - Access to clinical pharmacists and physiotherapists

- While some PCN GPs have specialisms (e.g., dermatology), GPs are not shared across practices at this time.

5. Premises and Facilities

5.1 Capacity and Space

- Anticipated growth in staff and patient numbers will eventually necessitate additional physical space.

5.2 Parking Issues

- A patient raised concerns about the lack of disabled parking.
- Proposal to repurpose underutilised taxi bays on nearby streets for short-term disabled parking.
- Suggestion to introduce three-hour parking limits to ensure turnover.
- A patient is in contact with Councillor Theresa Fowler and the Practice Manager will continue pursuing the matter on behalf of the surgery.

6. Actions and Next Steps

Item	Action	Responsible
Total Triage Consideration	Monitor implementation at other practices and gather feedback	Practice Manager
Patient Survey	Circulate mini-survey to patients 2 weeks prior to next meeting	Practice Manager / PPG chair
Parking Improvements	Continue dialogue with the council, share correspondence	Practice Manager and Patient (Sue)
Review of Triage Impact on Exceptions	Ensure systems consider vulnerable patients' needs	

7. Next Meeting

Tuesday, 8 October 2025
A mini-survey will be distributed in advance to guide the agenda.