

The New Surgery

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

What is a Patient Participation Group

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group usually made up of patients and GP practice staff who work together to improve the experience of people registered at their practice. The PPG works together with the practice to represent the patient's voice in decision making, ensuring that all communities served by the practice are represented. PPGs can be involved in a wide range of ways across the practice.

PPGs are usually set up by a GP practice as part of their core contract but are then run by patients once they are established. Every PPG runs differently based on:

- Who is involved in running the group;
- The needs of the practice;
- The needs of the patient population.

This allows the PPG the freedom to be creative and unique in its approach; deciding what priorities and activities they want to be involved in to best serve their patient population.

What a PPG is:

- **Co-operative** - PPG members working with the practice to improve the service.
- **Representative** - a representative for the patient voice and the patient population.
- **Engaging** - a means to work with (engage) patients.
- **Assuring** - a place to discuss changes and developments to the practice.
- **Supportive** - a way to support the practice with campaigns and opportunities for patients to have their say.
- **Responsive** - a place to develop projects and ideas based on the needs of the area and patient population.
- **Collaborative** - a group that works with other PPGs as well as health and care organisations in the area.
- **Challenging** - As a critical friend, the PPG must be prepared to challenge the practice. This must be done constructively.

What a PPG isn't:

- **A place to complain** - the practice and NHS have ways for people to log individual complaints.
- **A talking shop** - although a chance to socialise, the group should be productive and focused.
- **A place to work on a personal campaign / issues** - PPGs need to work on projects that would benefit the wider patient population.
- **An all-access pass** - PPGs aren't entitled to access all areas of the practice (such as behind reception or staff offices) or to know information that isn't relevant to their role (such as the practice finances).
- **An independent group/organisation** - although PPGs can be independent in how they carry out their work, the practice is ultimately responsible for them. PPG members should not be resistant to practice staff supporting the group, or their being involved.

For a PPG to be effective, it needs to have:

- Leadership from within the PPG.
- Commitment and support from within the practice, this includes supporting it to host meetings and appropriate resources for it to deliver an agreed work plan
- A clear understanding of the role of the PPG
- An understanding of the ways in which the practice operates, and the roles of the staff
- Clear purpose and a set of realistic objectives

There also needs to be trust and co-operation between patients and the practice staff.

Why Patient Participation Groups?

Having a PPG can bring significant benefits to a practice and its patients:

Benefits to the patients

- Service improvements and the promotion of good health locally
- Helping the practice to develop the services that reflect what patients need and want
- Patients are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own health
- Improved communication with staff
- Patients have a forum to suggest positive ideas and voice concerns
- Influencing decisions about the services provided
- Practical support such as wellbeing activities or groups, for example, walking groups, or illness management support sessions.

Benefits to the practice

- GPs and staff can plan services jointly with patients to increase their effectiveness
- Patients can play a key part in forming and monitoring annual improvement plans
- Help patients with non-medical and social care issues
- Support from patients in meeting targets and objectives
- Staff have a forum to suggest ideas and voice concerns
- The practice gets closer to the community it serves.

Benefits to the community

- Patients have a group through which they can communicate the specific needs of the local community and influence the health services that are commissioned (paid for)
- The local community has improved access to its health and care providers
- Better partnership working between the practice and local groups eg the third sector and community leaders
- The community gets closer to the practice that serves it.