

MINUTES OF STAPLEHURST PPG MEETING

Held on Wednesday, 10th July 2019

In the Staplehurst Health Centre

Present: Andrew Watson Chair & Acting Secretary
Elaine Handover Practice Manager
Parish Council Chairman Paddy Riordan
Parish Cllrs Joan Buller, Helen Miller, and Adele Sharp
And 14 further members
Guest speaker: Craig Brown, Strategic Business Development Manager for the Weald Primary Care Network

Apologies: Mary Shaw, Rory Silkin, Alaine & Brian Summers, and Barbara Keel (who is seriously ill at present – so we all wished her well)

Some key points from Craig Brown's introduction to the concept of Primary Care Networks:

- Primary care networks were introduced into the English NHS as part of the NHS Long Term Plan in 2018, and the 2019 GP contract required practices to join networks. Each network is to have between 30,000 and 50,000 patients. The stated aim is to create local fully-integrated community-based health services
- This new organisation replaces the earlier patient-choice arrangements
- The practices will receive additional funding to enable them to provide a wider range of specialised services, such as clinical pharmacists & social prescribing link workers, and subsequently for physiotherapists, physician associates and paramedics.
- The reason for the change is the age profile of the existing staff: one third will retire in the next five years. Re-organisation is a necessity.
- The Weald Primary Care Network comprises eleven practices, serving (at the last count) 50,000 patients. Clearly the upper preferred range limit of 50,000 will soon be reached. What will happen then? How robust is the new 'system'?
- The answer: Health 'Eco' Systems. The key will be to engage with the commissioning groups and procurement of materials – a new generation of procurement-purchasing specialists is being recruited.
- On-going training will be provided through an 'education network'; but there seems to be an issue regarding who is to fund this. In the debate, KCC was said to be 'top slicing', implying that KCC charges the practices for training.

Minutes of the last PPG AGM: The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th April 2019 were agreed as accurate with the following single correction: in the Health Centre News, the Staplehurst Safety Event (at which the Friends decided NOT to have a stall) required the following additional point of clarification – 'because other events in the village (such as the Annual Fete) provide insurance cover for the event in their stall charges.'

Matters Arising: In response to criticisms of the Health Centre's referral procedures made on the village's Facebook page, prior to the meeting of 10th April, The Centre's Tasmeyah Uddin had produced two short procedure documents entitled: *Patients that are being referred and what to expect, and Referrals using the Benenden members' scheme*. The reason for the second document is to reduce the number of delays to NHS referrals (i.e. those of non-Benenden patients) caused by

NHS referrals being made for Benenden patients, which adds to the queue situation unnecessarily. It was explained that when the queues reached a certain limit, then referrals are rejected. To make the information contained in these documents available to the patients, they can now be found on the Health Centre website.

Tasmeyah talked the meeting through the two processes, giving some idea about the times (delays) patients can expect to encounter: following the GP interview it can take up to four weeks for receipt of the referral letter. The earliest slot for the appointment with the consultant, which must be arranged by the patient themselves, might be up to 18-24 weeks ahead. In some situations, if the queue is too long, then the referral might not be accepted – when it becomes the responsibility of the patient to follow up for an appointment. In this situation the surgery cannot help and, if they did, then the patient's place in the queue will be lost, with the patient's appointment being remade at the back of the queue at the time of the surgery's intervention. The meeting expressed some cynicism about the impact on the NHS' 'response' statistics when the referrals are ignored because the queue is 'too long'.

Again, it becomes the patient's responsibility to follow up if nothing is heard – sometimes when the 'specialist' system defaults to 'triage', a process for which the patient should receive a date and a 'phone number. If nothing is heard, again, then it is the patient's responsibility to follow the matter up.

While the meeting expressed its appreciation of the action taken, Elaine stressed the point that the Health Centre will NOT respond to any complaints made on Facebook – if patients have an issue with the service they receive, then they should make their concerns known in person to the Health Centre staff.

Health Centre News – Elaine Handover:

- Elaine announced that the Health Centre is now out of 'Special Measures'.
- Dr Priya Jayapalan has decided to leave the practice – to avoid the regular abuse she has received from patients she has had enough. The example used by Elaine to illustrate Dr Priya's experiences fully justified her decision. The recruitment of her replacement is in process.
- Elaine and her team gave some horrific examples of the verbal abuse her staff experience from some of the patients, making the point that these not infrequent outbursts have a real effect on job satisfaction and staff moral – it is a serious cause of understaffing. While realising there might be better approaches, it was suggested that front-desk staff are trained to 'make a proceduralised pre-scripted comment before walking away to get assistance'. The meeting accepted that receptionists and nursing staff cannot be expected to endure such unpleasant outbursts. Elaine explained that to 'refuse service' was not an option without the involvement of the Police.
- The new telephone system has been installed. Elaine explained that when the available lines (6) are all in use, then the next callers will find the number engaged, and will have to redial. There is NO call-stacking option. The answerphone 'voice' is a recording by Dr Rumfeld.
- Our Health Centre is continuing to work towards the directive from the Medicines Management Team: to increase the percentage of prescriptions processed on-line to 80% by March 2020. To illustrate the magnitude of the problem posed by the continued use of 'paper prescriptions' a chart covering a four-week period was presented, splitting the numbers of prescriptions by week, and by category – 'electronic', 'paper', and 'queries' (totals: 432, 1167, and 293 respectively). From these figures it was clear that many patients are reluctant to move away from (risk?) paper transactions the point was made that the surgery could be spared the excessive footfall and administrative effort if repeat prescriptions were asked for at the Lloyds Pharmacy at the time the prescriptions were

being collected. This simple expedient, of which most at the meeting (if not all, including the chairman) were blissfully unaware. Robin Oakley intends to include this 'recommendation' in the next 'Friends' newsletter.

- Under the new NHS 'contract' (from 1st April 2020 medical practices have to become part of a 'Primary Care Network'. On Monday evenings the Rubin Clinic is available for family planning and sexual health & counselling – aimed at the under25s. On Saturday mornings a physiotherapist is available, which requires an appointment to be made; but no GP's referral is required.
- The Saturday opening of the Centre part of the new strategy – when the Centre is manned by staff from other practices. While these non-Staplehurst staff are able to view patients' records, they are not able to make 'referrals'.

Friends News – Robin Oakley:

- The recent health-awareness evening raising the awareness of eye conditions, featuring two specialist speakers, had been well attended.
- The next health-awareness evening is scheduled for 2nd October, the subject: dementia.
- A treasure hunt had raised £15.
- GlaxoSmithKline are introducing a recycling option for their inhalers.

Any Other Business: There were no AOB items, and the meeting closed shortly after 9.00pm

Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting (the Annual General Meeting) will be held on Wednesday 9th October at 7.15pm in the Health Centre.