

Minutes of PPG meeting

Tuesday 27th September 2022 at the Park Pavilion

Apologies from: Fiona Gardner (MMC) and members: Elizabeth Davies, Phillip Davies, Michael Wyatt, Julie Kinnon

Present from MMC: Dr Nadeeja Koralage, Chloe Barclay (Admin), Caroline Sokhi (Pharmacist) Ben Notley (Head Receptionist)

1. **Welcome from Chair:** Kath welcomed members and the MMC representatives, and stated that a new Vice-Chair is required as Tom Johnson has resigned. Anyone interested to get back to Kath Calver or Rita Rossini.
2. **Minutes from Last meeting:** agreed.
3. **Matter arising from Minutes:** Kath stated that the MMC is not keen on the Push Doctor option, as they would prefer someone working partly from the practice and not wholly remotely. Dr Koralage is going to ask the partners about the 'Ask My GP' system for telephone access to additional GPs for advice and prescribing. Fiona Gardner is putting in place a 'roll-on-roll-off' training programme for receptionists to ensure they are all operating to the same standard. Chloe mentioned the template with red flags to help receptionists book appropriate appointments.
4. **Address from the Chair:** Kath stated that the PPG is keen to work with the MMC, to negotiate improvements as identified by the community. The time-scale for the MMC answering morning calls has been much reduced, with more staff answering the phones.
Kath spoke about the need to make a shorter window for doctors responding to triage calls, and stated that 3 hours would be helpful, as it's often difficult for patients to be available all day.. A member commented that receptionists do need to identify serious problems, whilst recognizing that some patients may be helped by pharmacists. Dr Koralage discussed the need to educate the public regarding the range of support available. Urgent medication queries could be dealt with promptly by the pharmacist.

Kath stated that the NE Essex Clinical Commissioning Group is now combined with Suffolk, forming the ICS (Incorporated Care System).

5.Up-dates from Dr Koralage: Dr Koralage discussed the need for a range of health pathways, but stated that Harwich is a deprived area with an acute problem. Many patients have complex needs. More staff are needed,

especially as 2 doctors have left including Dr Roberts who was full-time. Each doctor at the MMC now has 2,500 patients. Kath wondered if a notice should be placed in the local paper to this effect but Chloe stated that anyone phoning in would receive this message through the phone system. Dr Koralage stated that it's important for the area to have quality health care, and stated that the pandemic had resulted in a feeling of learned helplessness for some, and that lifestyle problems existed too. Marilyn Jones wondered if the appointment system was abused in some cases but Dr Koralage disagreed.

Dr Koralage stated that GPs follow protocols, with referrals to hospital as appropriate. But Dr Koralage did state that hospital waiting times have increased, with a comparatively short wait of 12 weeks for ENT, but 64 weeks for orthopaedic problems: so that if someone was having to wait a long time for an appointment they would often need to use the GP service in the interim.

Dr Koralage stated that a vicious cycle of problems occurs if jobs seem overwhelming, and staff often move, as stress is added to an increased workload. A PPG member asked if it is difficult to see a GP as they work part-time. Rita Rossini suggested that patients could check their doctors' work days on the MMC www if they are able to wait.

A number of concerns from members were expressed that appointments are difficult to obtain, and Dr K discussed the role of nurses, including the prescribing nurses. Marilyn Jones asked if we can make appointments to see nurse practitioners, and Dr K stated that these appointments can be made online, or through the 8.00am calls. A PPG member asked if Bernard Jenkin MP should be alerted to the shortage of doctors, and we learned that Tom Fairweather (his assistant) had resolved one difficulty. Marilyn Jones wondered if the new Integrated Care Service could help with staffing problems. Dr K said she had met with Ed Garret, their CEO, and they are trying to assist, through a national advertising campaign. Doctors seem reluctant to work in areas of deprivation, even with a hybrid working model, and it is expensive trying to fill with locums. Dr K would like to get trainee doctors on board. Doctors trained overseas could also be sponsored by employers.

The PCN (Primary Care Network) has been able to offer some additional resources, eg a Pharmacist and a new full-time matron, in addition to a Counsellor for Children and young people with mental health issues).

A member asked if it would be possible to come to some arrangement to get appointments with Colchester practice/s. Dr K stated that she is to meet the Colchester Hospital Medical Director to discuss inequality of access, but stated that equality of access would not happen if some patients have to go to Colchester.

5. **Talk by Pharmacist Caroline Sokhi:** Caroline explained that she is a fully trained pharmacist, and had worked for Boots for 30 years before joining the MMC, and explained her role in reviewing medication and addressing prescription enquiries.

6. **AOB:** A member asked if a separate prescription enquiry line could be set up, and Chloe will look into this. Marilyn asked if nurse and doctor appointments could be booked in advance. Nurse appointments can be booked on line but not doctors' appointments. A member enquired if blood tests can be booked on a flexible basis to link with up-coming hospital treatment and Dr K and Chloe confirmed that this is the case. Sheena Parsons is interested in Caroline giving a talk to the Harwich Guild.

7. **Next meeting 6th December.**