

DUKINFIELD MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NOTES OF A CONFERENCE CALL HELD ON TUESDAY 26 MAY 2020 AT 2.20–3.15 PM

Present: Geoff Hill (Secretary), Julie Pregnall (Practice Director), Marion Higgins (Chairperson), Joyce Jones, Sheila Frith (Record taker)

Apologies: Kath and Brian

Aims: To update the PPG with information relating to plans:

- To move the Practice on to one site, and
- To initiate a pilot to test an online triage system

Matters raised from the last meeting

Concerns were raised about the delays in distributing the newsletter. Julie said that there had been technical problems regarding some of the colours used on the draft. These had now been resolved and the order had been placed. It was expected to be delivered within the next few days and would be distributed to identified patients. There is a copy on the website. Brian was thanked. Favourable comments had been received from people viewing it on the website.

Julie reported that currently consultations are mostly held by telephone. It remains to be seen if advice changes in the coming days and weeks as restrictions are lifted. Demand has definitely been lower than normal levels. Whilst it was acknowledged that at one level people might be managing their own health in different ways, there is the risk that people in need of help are not contacting their doctors. Julie explained that there is an ongoing programme of contacting all patients over 70.

Testing for Covid-19 is now much more widely available than previously noted. It was asked if anti-body tests are available, but as yet the Practice has no information or guidance on them.

Moving to One Site

Julie reported on plans to move all Practice functions/staff onto the Concord Way site. An opportunity had arisen to expand the site and investigations appear to show that this offers more benefits than to continue across two. Currently the Birch Lane site is leased. Julie explained that the proposal involves an additional two storey build covering where the existing garden and garage lie. Six more consulting rooms would be provided along with additional administrative areas. It would also offer a valuable opportunity to reconfigure other space, including reception and waiting areas. Additionally, the Practice has been made aware of a small plot of land adjacent to the rear of the property that Tameside MBC is prepared to sell. This could offer useful space for storage facilities (eg bicycles) and perhaps allow for a small area that could be used as a recreational space, e.g. a small garden where people can choose to wait as they currently do in the existing garden. She asked for initial thoughts on this proposal. Almost all opinions were favourable whilst acknowledging that there could be some objections from people who still feel strong attachments to “The Hollies”. It was recognised that most people see doctors at Concord Way now, and although it might mean a slightly longer journey for some, this has been the established pattern for some time. Importantly, it was thought that this development could give the Practice opportunities to rectify current layout issues, have a whole-team approach under one roof, address health and safety issues, reduce overheads and in general offers ways to improve services and benefit patients. Approval from those present was unanimous.

Online Triage Pilot

Our local Commissioning Group (CCG) purchased an online triage facility about a year ago. At the time, the Practice involved groups such as the PPG in plans on how it would be applied to its service. However, the current pandemic situation means that the system offers alternatives to the way in which patients access services. A pilot is proposed using those patients currently registered for electronic access. Over a 4 week period starting 1st June they will be asked to initiate contact for appointments, reviews etc., via this online system rather than by telephone. It offers a wider collection of information on which clinical staff can base their response to the patient. Other patients will continue to use their normal means/method of contact. At the

end of the pilot period, participants will be asked to complete a survey. Julie said she felt that it offered staff the opportunity to manage the demand more effectively, i.e. rather than allocation of appointments being based on how soon one requests an appointment, it would be based on actual need. It is important to acknowledge that the system is also intended to deal with all episodes daily, i.e. all identified requests would be looked at on the day of receipt, not at an appointment offered in the future. This is an obvious benefit for patients.

Geoff pointed out that he felt the system had limitations in recognising some terms, i.e. those that people use in everyday laymen's language. Julie acknowledged this and said that if the pilot captured sufficient information, then changes can be requested from Egton, the provider. It was also recognised that failures such as a system crash would have a serious impact, but again, this is a risk that most organisations face. Geoff also pointed out that it's important that adequate guidance is made available for the pilot to bring the most benefit.

Other Matters

Geoff asked if the Practice had plans for re-starting routine blood tests. As yet, Julie said that this, along with other similar issues, was constantly under review.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.