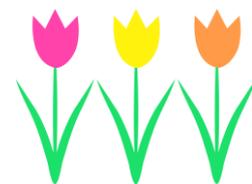




VSG PPG



Village Surgeries Patient Participation Group

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TATTENHALL & FARNDON NEWSLETTER SPRING 2019 ISSUE 6 - email – vsg.ppg@nhs.net

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PPG CHAIR, CLARE MARSH

We start our Spring 2019 Newsletter with a feature on Clare Marsh, our PPG Chair, who was unanimously re-elected at the Annual General Meeting held last November. Having previously 'spotlighted' our Pharmacists, it is now Clare's turn ...

CLARE'S STORY

Clare has been our inspirational PPG Chair since September 2017. She lives in Holt with her husband Rick, and her 13-year old cocker spaniel Murph. Clare's family has always lived in the area and when she is not busy with her local business, you will find Clare trail running with her husband - this year she has signed up for the Lakeland Trails 55K Ultra!



What made you want to join the PPG and be Chair?

Having been a patient for the past 45 years, I am passionate about ensuring that patients continue to have access to rural surgeries and all the benefits that they offer. My Mum lives locally but can't drive, and my 96-year-old nan still lives at home, so I appreciate just how important rural surgeries are for many patients. Some personal health challenges have simply reinforced this view.

Why do you think a PPG is important?

An active PPG is a 'critical friend' to many surgeries, particularly important in these times of upcoming changes within the NHS. The PPG provides us with a voice to those that hold the 'purse strings' for our VSG - the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). We are lucky that we have such strong support from the practice and the partner GPs, with Dr Siddorn attending our meetings as often as she can.

What are you most proud of achieving as a PPG?

My PPG family! I love working with everyone and our monthly meetings are such a positive and uplifting experience. We have started to make a real difference, identifying services which are on offer but about which many patients have no idea and then promoting these through our quarterly Newsletters. In addition, we have resolved the car parking issues at Farndon; surveyed patients to understand their key concerns and address them where we can, and we will continue to promote Online Patient Access for all. I also enjoy the opportunity to meet with other PPG Chairs once a quarter where we can learn from each other; usually they are learning from us and many are certainly not as active as our PPG!

You were re-elected as Chair in November - what do you see as critical to do in the next year?

It will be important to develop our rural communities and try to re-establish the 'old way' of living, where we took care of each other to prevent social isolation. There are several initiatives that have been tried elsewhere and I hope we can bring these to Farndon, Holt and Tattenhall. An example of this is a 'dementia friendly village scheme'. The VSG is planning to have a 'Health Hub Family Day' later in the year where we can bring families and neighbours together and promote some of these initiatives. In addition, it will be important to continue to promote Online Patient Access and increase the uptake – too frequently patients comment that they have struggled to get appointments when they phone the surgery, but if they have signed up to Online Patient Access they may well find there is an available appointment.

What concerns do you have for General Practice/NHS?

Our 4 CCGs are merging in April and going forward there will be only 1. This is bound to impact rural practices although at this stage we don't fully understand the possible consequences. Working with other PPGs will help keep us aligned as this change happens. The VSG and PPG will continue to work very closely together to identify ways that we can continue to protect what services we can for patients.



NEW PRACTICE MANAGER

The Partners are delighted to announce that Kate Evans has been appointed 'Practice Manager' for the VSG. Kate has worked at the Practice for many years and is fully experienced in the workings of Primary Care. She was instrumental in the merger of Tattenhall and Farndon, thus avoiding their possible closures, and will now head up the VSG ensuring continued services for our patients in the years ahead.

WHAT IS PATIENT ACCESS?

With 'Patient Access', you can view, book and cancel appointments from home, work or whilst on the move – in fact, wherever you can connect to the internet.

What's more, because 'Patient Access' is a 24-hour online service, you can login at any time; day or night.

'Patient Access' is not just for booking GP appointments; you can also order repeat prescriptions, see your test results and access your medical records. Many of you will have seen the signage which is up in both surgeries.

By registering, you can save yourself time and the VSG staff too – it makes perfect sense.



CARING FOR FARMERS

Many individuals within the VSG are farmers and their families, agricultural workers (retired or still working), or members of agricultural ancillary trades. Have you heard of 'The Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy'; a free, confidential, non-judgmental listening ear across the whole of Cheshire, offering practical solutions for the farming community.

The Chaplaincy helps those involved in farming who are struggling or experiencing difficulties, be it financial pressures, family disputes, bereavement, illness, rural isolation, long hours, policy and regulation problems etc.

We are a team of Farmers, Agricultural Specialists & Clergy who have support from legal & professional advisors and we can also signpost you to other supporting agencies.



We also aim to build resilience in our agricultural community by talking to young farmers and farmer groups and by encouraging participation in our active social calendar – please visit www.agchap.com or you can follow us on Facebook @agriculturalchaplaincy or Twitter @cheshireagchap



INTRODUCING ADVANCED NURSE PRACTITIONER SISTER MCCALLUM

We are delighted that we now have a new Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Sister McCallum, who brings with her many years of experience and knowledge as a dedicated nurse. Sister McCallum can diagnose, prescribe and, if need be, refer patients. She is working four days per week and can be seen at both Farndon and Tattenhall.

ZERO TOLERANCE – AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Regrettably, we report that one of our PPG team witnessed, first hand, abusive language being directed at a member of the practice staff.

This was particularly distressing to patients in the waiting area, where young children were also in attendance. Whilst this type of incident is very rare within our patient footfall of over 8000 patients, we are sure you will all agree that this sort of behaviour is totally unacceptable.

Your VSG supports the government's 'Zero Tolerance' campaign for Health Service Staff. This states that GPs and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused.

Our staff aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances.

They would respectfully remind patients that very often staff might be confronted with a multitude of varying and sometimes difficult tasks and situations, all at the same time. Our staff also understand that ill patients do not always act in a reasonable manner and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

We ask you to treat your GPs and all practice staff courteously at all times.

DEATH OF MUCH-LOVED GP – DR MARGARET SANDERSON

We have recently heard of the death of one of our former, much-loved GPs, Dr Margaret Sanderson, aged 84. Many Tattenhall readers will remember her well.

Margaret came from a medical family; her brother Dr Andrew Sanderson was a GP in Spennymoor in the NE. She qualified in Newcastle before moving to Cheshire, living firstly in Tattenhall and later in Bickerton.

We approached Dr Philip Milner who joined the Tattenhall Practice in 1981, at which time Dr Margaret Sanderson was a Partner with Dr Kershaw.

Philip recalls that Margaret was quite a character and came across as a strict, old-fashioned type of doctor, who expected her advice to be obeyed!

That said, he recalls that she had a huge level of commitment in her role as a local GP and that she was always a strong advocate for her patients; particularly standing firm for the interests of the most vulnerable patients.

Margaret retired on ill health grounds in the 1980s. She settled in Cumbria where she continued with her passion for Carriage Driving.



MISSED APPOINTMENTS

We continue our commitment to publish missed appointments with a doctor and/or practice nurse. For the months of January and February, **126** and **112** appointments were missed respectively.

If you have a pre-booked appointment which you know you will be unable to attend, please let the practice know so that your appointment can be cancelled and re-allocated to someone who might need to see one of our practitioners.

TELEPHONE APPOINTMENTS – A STRESS FREE EXPERIENCE

Our patient survey revealed that many patients were particularly frustrated with the process of booking 'on-the-day' surgery appointments by telephone i.e. the 8.00am scramble! A complete review of the VSG Telephone System has been undertaken, therefore, to determine how existing arrangements can be used most effectively, and to identify what, if any, improvements can be made

In shadowing the practice staff, it became immediately obvious that in many instances there was no urgent need for an 'on-the-day' appointment & that telephoning the practice later in the day resolved early morning stress levels. It seems perfectly reasonable, therefore, that as patients we should all consider just how urgent is the problem that we face.

Some of our observations are listed below which we hope will help you to better understand how the VSG Telephone System works and how to use it to best effect. We have examined all the recorded messages and re-worded them to minimise the time spent per call and to maximise the number of calls that can be dealt with, particularly during that 8.00am-9.00am slot. Messages naturally change throughout the day to reflect the services available ...

8.00am-9.00am - this time slot is for those patients who have a genuinely urgent or acute problem to get the help they need, be it a doctor or nurse appointment, or a telephone discussion with a doctor. Some patients are uncomfortable with the idea of explaining on the telephone why they need an appointment. There is no obligation for you to give any information about your condition. However, VSG receptionists are highly trained, and have a complete overview of all doctor/nurse availability. A brief indication of your problem helps them to suggest an option that best suits your needs.

If your need is urgent but you keep getting an engaged tone, it may ease your stress levels to know that every weekday morning between 8.00am-9.00am, 4 members of staff are answering 4 VSG telephones. If you hear an engaged tone it is because 4 other patients are being attended to. It is not just 1 receptionist answering 1 telephone; just keep re-dialling. When you get the ring tone, you are through to VSG and you will hear a recorded message before your call is answered.

The 8.00am-9.00am message has been kept deliberately short to save time and frustration for genuine callers, whilst encouraging patients with non-urgent or acute problems to call back later.

9.00am-2.00pm – the message explains that prescription requests cannot be made over the telephone and that test results are not available until after 2.00pm. If you are put on hold, you will also hear a message explaining that appointments can be made up to two weeks in advance.

2.00pm-6.30pm - the message remains the same, but with the additional option to 'Press 4' for test results.

6:30pm-8.00am – the message states that the 'Surgery is now Closed' and advises that help can be obtained by dialling 111 for the free NHS 111 service, or dialling 999 for life-threatening medical emergencies. This message is also used on occasions when the surgery has to be closed during the day.

We thank the VSG staff for their patience during the review and for fully implementing our suggestions.





Primary Care
Cheshire



Many of life's problems can make you feel unwell.

Social prescribing helps you explore extra services that may support you to improve your health and sense of wellbeing.

Social prescribing enables a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional to refer you to a Wellbeing Coordinator based in your practice to talk about the issues you're facing and find the right services to support you.

The service helps you improve your health and wellbeing and to make positive life changes.

The next steps

Just ask someone at your GP Practice to make a referral. It is quick and easy.

The Wellbeing Coordinator can support you with the following;

Housing, benefits, and financial advice

Employment, training and volunteering

Education and learning

Healthy lifestyle advice and physical activity

Arts, gardening, creative activities

Befriending, counselling and groups