

PPG Meeting 15th January 2025

Present: Chris Smith, Peter Jay, Nicola Johnson, Joe Stokvis, Richard Moon, Mary Sheppard, Mary Cobbett, Tony Fleming, Lynne Earthy, Tatyana Cheung, Sarah Storer, Dr Peter Hill, Dr Freddie Charrington.

Apologies: David Hindle, Margaret Toms, Anna Lockhart, Colin Mutton

The minutes of last meeting were approved.

Practice Update

The practice is currently well staffed. The practice has recently recruited another Health Care Assistant to increase capacity for blood tests, diabetic health checks and NHS health checks. The practice is in the process of recruiting 2 pharmacy technicians to support with medication reconciliation post discharge, medication queries, pharmacy and patient liaison, drug shortages and safety and audits.

We are currently short staffed and recruiting Patient Care Advisors, which has increased our waiting times on the phones. However, patients can request a call back to save waiting in the queue.

Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing is defined as an approach that connects people to activities, groups and services that meet practical and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing.

The practice is starting its own in-house social prescribing service from Monday 27th January. There will be a soft launch with in-house referrals to begin with. Following that, the practice will reach out to specific cohorts of patients, including those with chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia as often, these patients present with non-medical needs due to their condition that could be supported via the social prescribing service.

The service is being run by the practice care coordinators, who are dedicating a day each to the role. Recruitment is happening to offer backfill for this time and each care coordinator has completed the training necessary to begin the role. Several members of the PPG were pleased to hear the update regarding social prescribing. Mary Cobbett will share a template with the practice for information needed by patients for benefits assessments, which can be passed on to the Social Prescribing team.

Training Practice

The practice currently has a 2 GP Trainee at Cirencester and Tetbury, supervised by Dr Khalid Al-Khayat and Dr Angus McMyn who are with us until 5th February, to be followed by two more. The practice is currently hosting year 5 medical students for a 9-week placement, to be followed by further placements of Years 3,4 and 5 medical students.

NHS App

The practice is looking into ways of encouraging patients to download and use the NHS App, including adding a message to our phone lines. Text messages sent via the NHS APP are free and the ICB are asking us to review our text messaging as costs are spiralling. It also allows for patients to request their medication, view their record etc, including results without the need to phone the practice, reducing traffic on the phone lines.

Improvement Grant

The practice is looking into the possibility of utilising improvement grant money to refurbish the waiting room at Cirencester. We are currently in the tendering process.

Clinical System

The practice will be changing its clinical computer system in June to a system called Systm1. Most of Gloucestershire is already using Systm1 and most community services also use it so it will enable better data integration and interoperability. Systm1 also has better functionality than our current system. However, it is a big change, and we will be communicating with patients nearer the time to be patient when we move over, as some things may take longer than usual during the transition.

Premises

Tetbury: An archaeological appraisal has occurred and nothing of interest has been found so work should begin shortly.

Cirencester: Dr Peter Hill has had positive talks with BDL who are supportive of a health centre on site but need to iron out some issues with planning and access before proceeding. It is likely talks will resume in a few months' time. The likely disappearance of the District Council under the Government Devolution proposals would likely slow progress down but Mary Cobbett who is on the board of trustees for the Steadings site confirmed that the Section 106 would remain unaffected. Dr Hill responded to an email from David Hindle regarding the Steadings site. We are some time away from working through the specifics of the development. However, the NHS has a formula for how many car parking spaces should be available based on list size. For example, at Tetbury there are currently 12 parking spaces; the new build will have approximately 60.

Infection Rates

The practice has had a successful vaccination campaign and flu vaccines continue to be available until the end of March. Covid vaccines are no longer available from the practice but Public Health are running some clinics. The practice reviews its vaccination campaign seasons each year and will be looking at ways to increase uptake for next year. Anecdotal feedback suggests patients have had the flu vaccination and are still contracting nasty viral infections due to the different strains but the vaccination should help with the impact of the virus.

Mindfulness on prescription

This is a joint venture between the Phoenix Trust and the practice. There were some taster sessions last year in September with promotion via practice Facebook and posters but there was insufficient uptake to warrant full roll-out. Subsequently, a text message was sent to 1500 registered patients who were assessed as potentially benefitting from the service. As a result, more than 100 people have applied. The course is limited to 25 people and is getting underway on the 12th Feb. It's a 8-week course for 2 hours a week and includes a silent retreat day.

The Phoenix Trust secured funding from the District Council and Town Council which has allowed them to heavily subsidise the course. An appraisal process will follow this first cohort and there are plenty of people waiting for the next course to run.

Talking newspapers

Chris Smith made the group aware of talking newspapers for the visually and reading impaired and for anyone who would prefer to access the news via this medium.

Local and national versions of talking newspapers are available online.

The local version is provided by Corinium Talking News, which provides weekly versions and a monthly magazine. To be able to access, you can do this by a couple of clicks on their website or you can set up SKILL on the Alexa App (called Talking Newspapers), which provides access to any talking newspaper around the UK.

Nationally the RNIB have something called the Newsagent which can be accessed via the RNIB.

NHS APP

Chris Smith is aware of an initiative within Gloucestershire Libraries whereby staff have been asked to watch a series of 11-minute videos in order to support service users with the NHS App. Chris Smith will send the link for the video around to the group. Tetbury library intends to run some sessions in June and they will be helpful for those not confident in the use of technology. There are no current plans for something similar at Cirencester library.

Peter Jay mentioned that the PPG used to support with awareness campaigns in the waiting rooms prior to Covid. However, sometimes there was insufficient time to talk to patients before they were called for their appointment. It was suggested that the videos could be added to the waiting room screens and to the practice Facebook. It would also be beneficial to be shown at local pharmacies.

The training remit of the IT & Systems Digital working group is currently under review but a multi-factored approach was felt best, including simply raising awareness of the app, which could be done in the waiting rooms.

It was acknowledged that there are multiple platforms for patient access, including the NHS App, practice website, Patient Online Access. Claire believes the national agenda will be for the NHS App to eventually become the central platform. Richard will look at the publicly available information to see if the Department of Health have provided a timeline of development.

IT & Systems Digital Working Group

Due to workload pressures, there was no update. Richard has agreed to be a co-chair.

Primary Care Strategy reference group

Those in the group are now involved in the National NHS Plan and there is a workshop planned for tomorrow. Chris will send around to the PPG if permission is granted. Previous attempts to look at the 10-year plan have been delayed by the election and the Darzi report.

AOB

Lynne Earthy requested some chair risers for the Chesterton Lane waiting room.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 9th April.