



LETTERBAG

My experience as a member of a Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Almost 2 years ago I decided to join the Kirkburton Health Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG). I wasn't sure what it would involve but the Health Service seemed to be in turmoil and I thought if I could put a patient's perspective forward it may help.

I was welcomed on my first meeting and it soon became clear that the group's input and suggestions were greatly valued by the Practice and every effort made to implement them where appropriate.

Later that year we decided to make the group more formal and I agreed to be the Secretary. We also have a Chairperson. There are 43 names on our database but generally we have an average of 10 attendees at our 6 weekly meetings.

Minutes are circulated by email to the 43 after each meeting as well as being posted to the website. Our meetings last for no more than an hour and we set an agenda which focuses our minds.

In Spring last year the Chairperson and myself were asked if we would participate in a film and be interviewed as we were regular users of the Practice website and online booking system. This film was commissioned by NHS England and is being shown nationally to promote online systems to other GP practices.

Recently we have been giving a lot of thought to how we can help to streamline the services even more. On a typical Monday, the Practice reception team can receive anything up to 450 telephone calls a day; 100 in the just the first hour of the day. Often these calls are for repeat prescriptions or non-urgent appointments. This is surprising really as the Practice have a very easy to use system for online repeat prescription requests and routine appointment booking. Last year the prescription phone line was decommissioned to help with the way the calls were handled. However, with growing demand we are faced with reviewing how repeat prescriptions are handled in the future. Other GP practices have stopped all phone calls for repeat prescriptions and this is something that the Practice may have to consider as an option.

Perhaps you all need encouraging! Using the online system could really help you and the Practice enormously. We have a great Health Service which is overburdened and we should do all we can locally, as patients to help.

The Patient Participation Group is thinking of ways of helping patients to use these systems and we have some ideas which we will discuss at our next meeting.

If you are a patient of Kirkburton Health Centre and interested in becoming a member of our group please join us at our next meeting at Kirkburton Health Centre on Monday April 13th at 6.00pm.

Carole Hepworth
Secretary of Kirkburton Health Centre PPG