**Date:** 09 November 2020 (at 14:30)

**Venue:**  St Georges Medical Practice via Zoom

**Attendees**

Liz Stewart (ES) – Chair/minutes

Jan Jameson (JJ) – Reception supervisor

Grahame Levett (GL)

Marjorie Dunn (MD)

Val Johnston (VJ)

Serena Rana-Rahman (SR)

Andy Jones (AJ)

**Apologies**

Jane Sinski (JS)

Frank Mills (FM)

**Agenda used**

1. Roll call / apologies
2. Review minutes & any matters from previous meeting – All
3. Staff changes – ES
4. Update on New Surgery – ES
5. Telephone appointments - GL
6. Arrange next PPG meeting & assign actions - All
7. AOB

**SUMMARY MEETING NOTES**

**Roll call / apologies** - Roll call was taken and apologies noted.

**Review minutes** – No matters outstanding.

**Staff Changes** - ES advised the following staff changes:

* A new IT administrator has started – Tracey
* A nurse practitioner has been appointed – Hayley
* A new reception supervisor has stared (and joined the PPG call!) – Jan
  + Jan introduced herself and explained that she has 30 years’ experience in the NHS. She has also worked at a Marie Curie hospice
* A new receptionist has also started – Mercedes

**General updates**

Liz explained that the flu clinic was run in house at the surgery building as we did not have enough staff to send off-site to the shared flu clinic locations. This worked very well.

Our practice newsletter has been delayed due to other pressures on time.

Liz explained that complaints have also multiplied recently from 2 – 3 a quarter to 2 – 3 a week. The practice team record and respond to these complaints and introduce improvements where possible.

Some of the complaints have been beyond the control of the practice and some typical examples are:

* Lack of availability of the flu jab for all over 50’s. This vaccine was not supplied, as had been suggested by the government, and was therefore not available.
* Covid vaccine availability.
* E-consultation complaints.
* Appointment system complaints.

**Update on New Surgery**

The Community Ventures Management team have advised recently that progress is currently slow. They are working on agreeing the legal structure / hierarchy with NHSPS (NHS Property Services) which is complex to do.

The site purchase is progressing but, unfortunately, the contractor that had been working on the planning for the build has gone into administration recently which is a setback.

Once the site purchase goes under contract and the legal ‘Heads of Terms’ is agreed with NHSPS, which is expected by the end of the year, then momentum should carry through into design in early 2021.

Revised estimated date for the new surgery to be operational remains December 2021, subject to re-planning.

**Telephone Appointments**

Grahame explained that the triage telephone appointments, which are currently the 1st step in any GP consultation, can be subject to long delays of an hour or more from the appointed time. And the uncertainty this creates is not easy to deal with as it essentially means the patient is in limbo waiting for the phone to ring.

Liz acknowledged this and explained that the phone appointments are made for a specific 10 minute slot but the notification to patients states a period of several hours due to the difficultly the GP’s sometimes have in getting hold of people.

Liz also advised that some people have an expectation that the GP will be able to be very flexible and will ring back at a different time if they ask for this. Patients see the phone appointments as less important than coming into the surgery and assume the GP can accommodate any request they make for a conversation at another time.

The difficulties with making contact and the flexibility some patients expect cause fluctuations in the appointment timings and can have a knock on effect.

Grahame also explained that patients like to see their doctor face to face and phone calls or video calls are not always very well received.

Grahame has received a feedback request from Health Watch who are collating inputs regarding digital appointments from patients aged over 65 as part of a project which is looking at patient exclusion due to the current digital interactions. Val mentioned that she is a director of Health Watch. The Health Watch project feedback is also being requested from surgery staff.

Liz advised that the current triage service is expected to stay in place for the foreseeable future. And all appointment types, including emergency appointments, will be carried out remotely in the first instance.

Liz mentioned that the practice is doing its best to remain fully accessible although a pre-booked appointment, before attending, is very much encouraged to help keep everyone safe.

Liz also explained that the practice is receiving more appointment types than ever before. Patient appointments are being made on the phone to reception, via the practice website and also directly by the staff on the 111 service.

The number of appointments carried out by the doctors is the same as it was before the covid restrictions but the doctors and staff are having to clean and prepare the consultation rooms between each on-site appointment. Also, the doctors and staff are having to dress in protective kit and all this takes time.

It is hoped that where patients are, perhaps, wanting a reassuring chat or some advice that does not necessarily require a GP that the new social prescribers service might help pick up some of the workload. The social prescribers will work directly with the practice once established.

The social prescribers will help patients find appropriate services other than those offered at the surgery and they will sign post, for instance, to:

* Local pharmacies / pharmacists
* Darlington Musculoskeletal (MSK) Service – 01325 728988
* MECS (Minor Eye Conditions Service) – see practice website for details
* And other services as described on the practice website appointments page

**AOB**

**‘Spread the word’** – Liz advised that the reception team is getting a lot of flak from a minority of patients and a kind word for the team should be encouraged.

Val asked what processes are in place to protect staff from abuse and Liz explained that warning letters can be sent to patients if they abuse the service. And in extreme cases the police will be called and patients struck off the list.

Val voiced her praise for the staff and the fine service that they provide. She also mentioned that the first contact these days is much improved and very pleasant indeed which is a credit to Liz, Jan and the whole team.

**Middleton pharmacy** – deliveries to vulnerable patients are in effect again due to the current lockdown.

**Next PPG meeting**

To be arranged for the second half of January 2021.

**Actions**

| Number | Description | Action | Owner | Status |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
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