**Woodhill Surgery Patient Reference Group**

A meeting was held at the Woodhill Surgery on 28th February 2014. Those present were Andrew Cornell (Practice Manager), Dr. Richard Baxter (GP), John Gaunt (Acting Chair, WPG) & Bill Dixson (Deputy Chair WPG).

At this meeting the Woodhill Patients Group (WPG), a formally constituted Patients Participation Group (PPG) were invited to act as the Patients Reference Group (PRG) for the Woodhill GP practice.

The WPG was established in July 2011 and its objectives are “To support Woodhill Surgery, to give its patients a voice and to aim to promote health and well-being in the Community of Mayfield and Five Ashes”. Any patient of Woodhill Surgery may become a Member of the Group.

As of March 2014 we have a total of 138 members of which 89 have supplied information on their age, gender, and ethnicity and if they are registered disabled or a carer. A breakdown of these demographics is given below:

Gender:

Male - 44 Female - 45

Age:

(Under 25) - 0 (25-59) - 25 (60 and over) - 64

Ethnicity:

White British 89

Registered with a disability: 1

Registered Carer: 3

The WPG are actively seeking to attract more members especially from the under-represented groups and are considering a number of initiatives over the coming 12 months to this end. We will consult with the practice in our capacity as the PRG to ensure we reach as many patients as possible.

The WPG were presented with the results of the 2013/14 patient survey conducted by the surgery. It was agreed that these results would be discussed at a meeting convened by WPG on 26th March 2014 in its role as the PRG and the resulting action points would be noted.

The following are the main observations and action points arising from that meeting which we feel deserve consideration for inclusion in an Action Plan going forward.

A total of 117 responses to the patients survey were analysed. It should be noted that the incumbents have only been in place since June 2013 when the Ashdown Forest Health Centre were awarded the GP contract for Woodhill Surgery following the dissolution of the previous partnership. As such there will have been a significant number of patients who have not yet used the new services on offer or may only have had a limited experience and this would naturally be reflected in the levels of ‘No opinion’ responses to some of the questions.

It was noted that overall satisfaction with the practice was very good. The additional consultation slots, a total of 6 GPs available at various times, the introduction of online booking of appointments and repeat prescription services were all welcomed. There was also much praise for the service provided by the doctors, nurses and reception staff. There were a few patients who expressed specific grievances with one or more of these areas but overall the early signs for this newly established team are encouraging.

A number of areas were identified where we feel that some further attention is warranted.

**Continuity of Care**

Some patients expressed frustration at seeing a different clinician each time they visited the surgery. In one extreme case a patient visited the surgery 6 times and saw 6 different doctors. With the current staffing rota there is only one doctor available during morning sessions Monday through Friday with the other 5 GPs attending for one day a week each. We would suggest that, unless appointments were urgent and therefore arranged on short notice, patients who wished a more consistent relationship with their GP of choice could perhaps plan their appointments to achieve this.

ACTION: We would recommend that the practice advertises their staffing rota and booking procedures as widely and frequently as possible to ensure patients are well informed.

**Call for appointments outside of the current 8am-6.30pm Monday – Friday regime**

According to information supplied by the practice the surgery is open from 8am – 6.30pm Monday to Friday and also on 2 Saturday mornings each month. Within these times morning surgery runs from 9am-12pm followed by telephone surgery. Afternoon surgery runs from 4pm-6.30pm. There were calls for extended early morning or evening consultation sessions to cater for patients whose work or family commitments made it difficult to attend during the currently offered times. We also note that the ‘Saturday morning surgeries twice monthly’ advertised on the surgery website do not specify which Saturdays or the times for such sessions or indeed what they are intended for.

ACTION: We would therefore ask the practice to consider these issues with a view to offering more choice and improve the dissemination of this information via their website and other mechanisms such as the monthly Mayfield and Five Ashes Newsletter. There should also be a much more detailed breakdown of appointment windows as it is understood that some afternoon sessions finish at 5.30pm.

**Confidentiality for patients around the reception desk area**

Improvements in patient confidentiality when conversing with the reception staff have already been implemented by the relocation of the reception desk window from the waiting room to the hallway and many patients have welcomed this. However it is still possible for conversations to be overheard and if these are particularly intimate could cause concern to patients.

ACTION: Whilst we recognize there is very little scope for creating a more private environment within the confines of the surgery we feel that other options should be considered. For example, if a patient wants to discuss an issue with the reception staff whilst there are other people in the vicinity could they be offered the choice to go to one of the other rooms if available. This would offer a much greater degree of privacy.

**After Care & support upon discharge from hospital**

One patient indicated that they would appreciate some form of follow-up from the surgery after they had been discharged from hospital after treatment (e.g. phone call or home visit in certain cases). This may already be the normal practice.

ACTION: Recommend that the practice advertise on their website, through the monthly Newsletter etc and via leaflets issued to patients due for surgery informing them of the follow up procedures and services that they can expect. This would alleviate undue worries on the part of the patient, particularly if they were living alone or vulnerable.

**Availability of minor surgical procedures at Woodhill**

Some patients expressed the inconvenience of having to travel to Forest Row for such procedures and requested that Woodhill was equipped and able to provide these services.

ACTION: It is our understanding that the Woodhill surgery premises are unfit for the purpose of carrying out minor surgical procedures due primarily to the lack of effective infection control. We would therefore suggest that this and any other reasons should be effectively communicated to patients via the mechanisms already mentioned.

**CONCLUSION**

The overall impression gleaned from the patient survey has been very encouraging given the relatively short period that the new clinical team has been in place. We have already seen some welcome improvements and general satisfaction levels expressed by the patients who responded are by and large good.

One question in the survey attracted the highest ‘poor’ rating of 14.5% and concerned the ‘Information provided by the practice about its services’. It is felt that more efforts in this area would go a long way to resolving some of the issues noted above. As a first step the surgery website could be used to explain to patients the reasons behind some of the concerns raised. We would also encourage the practice to make use of the monthly Newsletter as a tool for spreading the word. It may also be useful to produce a practice leaflet containing key information for those who may not have internet access or read the Newsletter.

One example of poor or muddled communication that can lead to confusion and frustration is demonstrated in the newly introduced online repeat prescription service. When registering for this service the patient can indicate where they would like to collect their prescriptions, and the choices are the ‘Reception’ at the surgery or ‘send to the Pharmacy’. If one selects the Pharmacy option and then proceeds to order their repeat prescription online they are informed once they have completed the process that:

‘Your prescription will be ready for collection at reception in two working days (after 2pm). If you wish to collect from the chemist please telephone the surgery and ask them to set things up for you’

It is such contradiction and misinformation that causes unnecessary frustration for patients and no doubt equal frustration from staff having to deal with these queries.