

Lanarkshire Medical Group Patient Participation Group update

The first Lanark Patient Participation Group (PPG) took place on Wednesday 18 August via MS Teams.

The group has been set up as a supportive mechanism to help improve service provision for the practice population whilst respecting the wellbeing of the practice staff.

Present at the meeting were [REDACTED] from the practice; patients [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from NHS Lanarkshire.

Scene setting

[REDACTED] shared some slides which set out the challenges being faced by every practice across the UK and specifically in Lanarkshire. These can be accessed in the pdf below (add pdf to practice website).

Against this context, [REDACTED] highlighted that there was no 'quick-fix' to improving/extending the numbers of GPs in Lanark (as is the case Lanarkshire/nationwide) and that the way forward would require a very different model of general practice than the traditional one whereby everyone who wants to see a GP does so.

This has been made even more complicated by the pandemic and the instruction from Scottish Government that two-metre distancing must remain and only those who require face-to-face consultation be offered the same.

The Scottish Government requires GP practices and other healthcare settings to have different infection prevention and control and physical distancing measures compared to other places such as shops, pubs and other social and hospitality settings. This is to help reduce the risk to practice staff and to people attending the practice who may be at greater risk if they catch Covid-19. This means that GP practices will be operating differently.

There was also a debate re how the membership of the PPG was drawn. [REDACTED] indicated that in the vast majority of cases, it was down to who expressed an interest, albeit there were very few examples of PPGs in Lanarkshire. In considering the people at the meeting, Craig suggested it gave a very good balance across age groups as well as membership of other groups such that it could extend reach across various key stakeholders, including 'carers'.

[REDACTED] went on to say that there was only 17% of practices across Scotland with a PPG and it is even less in a Lanarkshire context. The only practice in Clydesdale with such a group was Biggar. As such, for Lanark to implement a PPG was a significant step and exemplified the commitment of the new practice to improve service provision for the people of Lanark.

Practice update

Dr [REDACTED] provided the group with a summary of the various developments introduced since Lanarkshire Medical Group took over the running of the practice in April 2020:

- Over 90% of repeat prescriptions were now being managed within 48 hours

- Where this was not happening, it was likely associated with a new development to ensure requests for repeat prescriptions were reviewed robustly and where medication reviews were required, these were now being enacted
- Previous inherited backlog of requests from hospitals for GP interventions/monitoring of conditions now completed and all requests being completed within short timescales.
- In relation to practice staffing, the new partners have reviewed original practice staffing and now extended same. As well as additional GPs – there are now routinely a cohort of GPs that work throughout the week to support demand. There has also been new appointments re ANPs (Advanced Nurse Practitioners). This will support extended coverage for those patients with long term conditions, e.g. CHD, diabetes etc.
- The practice had also undertaken all the 'patients who were over 80 years of age' Covid vaccinations' in support of the wider response to Covid.
- Re telephone systems/access, it was noted that the practice was in discussion with NHS Lanarkshire re introducing a new software system that allowed more digital/tele-health interaction with patients that could increase speed of access for appropriate clinical advice. It was recognised that the current system caused some difficulties for patients seeking to access appointments/advice from the practice.

In summary, Dr [REDACTED] advised that whilst much progress had been made, Covid-19 had a significant impact on the original ambitions of the practice when initially taking over the practice. The new partners had also inherited a number of issues, none more so than the delay to ensure all hospital/other requests for support had been addressed. This has now been rectified.

He also advise that they had reviewed the number of GPs working in support of the practice and have increased these. There are now 7 GPs working to support the practice across the week, providing routine and urgent care whilst also undertaking medication reviews amongst other duties. The partners are continually reviewing the staffing with a view to maximising the numbers of each type of staff to ensure we try and match staff to service demand as much as possible in the very challenging environment which of general practice workforce and work load.

In the subsequent discussion, a number of requests for information were made and, in turn, there were a number of answers provided. A few of which are noted below.

- As was the case across Lanarkshire, routine 'baby checks' were suspended due to the pandemic. These have now been resurrected and are up to date.
- Arrangements will be made to allow any older person travelling by public transport to be accommodated in the building if arriving before their appointment time.
- Strict social distancing and Infection, prevention and control measures remain and as such, access to the practice is restricted to comply with same. Again this is the case across Scotland.
- Where patients have specific needs regarding appointment times, the practice does seek to accommodate same when known about.

Next meeting

A date for the next meeting has still to be finalised but the aim is to schedule the following month. An update from the next meeting will appear on the practice website.