**Oakwood Lane Medical Practice**

**Patients Forum**

**Annual Report April 2015**

**Introduction**

In April 2014 the Patients Forum had 12 patient members and 4 Practice members. The latter representing: Management, Admin, Nursing and Partners. During the year three patient members have resigned, two new members have joined, and a further four new members are joining from April 2015. This will bring patient member numbers up to 15 with 4 staff members. The Forum is aware that whilst members now better represent the diversity of Practice patients because particular efforts have been made to seek younger members and those representing ethnic minorities, the proportions do not yet reflect the Practice population. Recruitment will seek to increase diversity of membership as future vacancies arise. The Forum meets formally at approximately six week intervals, and has a pre-meeting for the patient members to aid discussions.

**New Health Centre**

The Forum has been pleased to take an interest in the design of the new health centre premises. Initially looking at draft designs and suggesting alterations, a number of which were incorporated into the new building, and also suggesting services they would like to see provided. The new premises opened at the beginning of September 2014, and during the first week Forum members made themselves available to welcome patients and help them find their way round the new building. During this period some patients made suggestions for further improvements which were passed, for considered action, to the partners. Some of the suggestions included: a large sign indicating that there is a car park to the rear of the building for patients use; signs to deter parking at the front of the premises which blocks road access; art work on the walls; a bench outside the rear doors for those waiting for taxis/lifts; some air conditioning and blinds for use in hot and sunny weather in the patient waiting areas. Other comments include the poor, uncomfortable, design of the waiting room chairs and the suggestion that they should all have armrests; concern about the long waiting time for their appointment past their given time; and a request for reception staff to better reflect the diversity of the patient population and to include some with bi-lingual skills.

The pharmacy, part of the premises but independent from the surgery, opened in January 2015.

During the year the Forum has taken an interest in other issues, in partnership and co-operation with the Practice, and where necessary has formed small groups to look at issues in more detail eg. compiling a new patient information leaflet and suggesting improvements to the Practice website; compliments and complaints; the appointments system.

**Patient Survey**

The Forum compiled a patient questionnaire to seek the views of patients about: the appointment and telephone systems; confidentiality, respect, dignity and support; community involvement; transportation to the surgery; complaints and satisfaction with the outcome; and asking for suggestions to improve their patient experience. This survey was available for patients to complete during February and early March 2014 and the data collected is in the process of being analysed. The Forum is aware that there are teething problems with the appointments system and telephone system, for example, and wanted to seek the views of the wider patient population to help make suggestions to the Practice for improvement.

**Information Leaflet and Website**

A small group has helped write a new patient information leaflet for the Practice and plans to review the content on a regular basis. The Practice website, which also provides information for patients is being reviewed and the group is aiding the Practice with positive suggestions and is helping with implementation.

**Compliments and Complaints**

The compliments/complaints leaflet and relevant Practice policy, which was devised by the Forum in co-operation with the partners in July 2013, was recently reviewed. Suggestions have been made to the partners for urgent staff training in this area, and to make sure that the policy and process already agreed is followed.

**Noticeboard**

The Forum has its own dedicated Noticeboard within the Practice waiting area so that patients can have information about the Forum and its current issues of interest. Currently, for example, the Forum is working on a poster for this noticeboard to advertise ‘Language Line’. This supports patients with language help, if needed, so they can speak fluently with their doctor, and is a professional, confidential, independent service. This support needs to be arranged at the time the appointment is booked as a double appointment is needed. The Forum has also been instrumental in designing and agreeing with the Practice a notice aimed at highlighting wasted appointments, which happens when patients make appointments but do not keep them.

**Community Involvement**

There is a large room upstairs that has been designated for community use. The Forum has been seeking the views of patients about how they would like to see this space used, and the additional services they would like the Practice to provide.

A Community Development Project between GP’s, voluntary groups and the community has been an exercise waiting to be developed. Discussions have been ongoing and the Forum is delighted that the Practice Health Champions project is underway and there is now a second group of volunteers supporting the Practice specifically looking at health related issues from a community perspective.

**Written communication**

A group of Forum members continues to look at standard written communications between the Practice and patients and suggest improvements, in order to improve clarity and accuracy.

**Appointments system**

A working group has met, comprising Practice staff and Forum members, to look at how well the appointments system is working and to suggest improvements. Doctor First, the system which came into use from July 2014 is used as a filtering system for patients who request ‘same day’ emergency appointments, and consists of a doctor phoning a patient back to discuss their request and take appropriate action. A problem has arisen because there are generally insufficient appointments, not just in this Practice, but country wide, to meet demand. In our Practice the Forum is working with staff to discuss how best to allocate the appointments available between different time frames. This is also about patient education and how to determine what is an emergency; what is quite urgent but not an emergency; and what is routine and can wait for the next ‘routine’ appointment. The latter can mean a current wait of almost four weeks and it is acknowledged that this is too long. The Forum is working with Practice staff to see how the appointments available can be rebalanced.

**Wider Involvement/Participation**

The Forum is kept informed of local Commissioning intentions, and is kept abreast of some of the work of local Commissioning Groups. The Forum will be looking carefully at communications from the CCG in future, and will want to see full and timely consultation where it is appropriate.

A patient member of the Forum represents the Forum at the North East Leeds Patient Participation Group, on which are patient representatives from all the Practices in the area to share ideas and good practice.

The Forum joined the National Association of Patient Participation groups (NAPP) for mutual support with similar groups around the country in December 2103 and renewed its membership in December 2014. Two members attended the Annual Conference, held in Leeds in June 2014, and found the experience stimulating, educational and informative. The next NAPP Annual Conference will take place on 6th June at Leamington Spa.

**Family& FriendsTest: Online Access to Records: Leeds Care Record**

Other initiatives the Forum has taken an interest in this year include: the mandatory ‘Family and Friends’ test introduced into primary care from 1st December 2014: a qualitative assessment of the appointments system, about which discussion for improvement is ongoing: patients access to their summary records online which is mandatory for general practices from 1st April 2015: the Leeds Care Record and care.data: and have engaged in a research initiative with a Clinical Fellow at Leeds University who is also a GP. The research asks if and how current patient and public involvement affects the delivery of primary care.

**Practice/Forum Engagement**

The Practice has said it is very supportive and appreciative of the Forum. The Partners have agreed an annual budget for the Forum to use for administrative work, travel expenses etc. The principle being that Forum members give their time freely but should not be out of pocket or precluded from being able to participate because of cost. This cannot cover childcare or carers costs.

The Partners have been asked what they would like to see as both the short and long term aims of the Forum. In the short term the outcomes from the patient questionnaire are seen as an important means of canvassing the wider patient population. The Partners hope that smaller pieces of work can be developed around such issues as access to services and improvements to the appointments system. They see working in co-operation continuing on areas such as the patient information leaflet, the website, art work for the health centres walls, and working on an ‘Opening Event’ to mark the new premises.

**Conclusion**

Choice, diversity, respect and co-operation are continuing aims for the future and we look forward to further developing relationships with the Practice to ensure excellent and robust working relationships to the benefit of everyone. Good communication and joint ways of working are essential. The Forum thanks the partners and practice staff for their commitment to become an inclusive team.

Forum members are committed to working hard and further developing team skills and abilities to make the Forum successful. The object of working together, in a spirit of co-operation, to ensure patients are at the centre of care and services being provided is an objective worth working for. The intention is to continue the good work with our Practice to ensure that it is a centre of excellence for the patients it serves.

31st March 2015