



Patient Group

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PATIENT GROUP BULLETIN ISSUE 9, NOVEMBER 2023

OPEN FORUM Q & A MEETING, 2 NOVEMBER AT 6 PM TO 7.30 PM

The Patient Group is hosting a question and answer evening to give patients the chance to put questions directly to Surgery staff. This is an opportunity to raise any issues concerning access, online bookings, patient care, hospital referrals, in fact anything you want to say (except personal medical matters). We will also hear Surgery news on future plans that affect us all.

On the panel will be a range of staff drawn from our GPs, Nurses, Physician Associates, Care Navigators and non-clinical staff. The evening will be overseen by Lynne Westhead, Secretary of the Patients Group.

The Open Forum will take place in St Mark's Hall, 53 Rowfant Street SW12 7AP, next to the Surgery, accessible from Rowfant St or via the Polish Church from Balham High Street.

This is the first event of its kind for BPS and the Patient Group (PG). Our experience is that BPS is a practice that listens but for this to work, patients are encouraged to speak up, ask questions, make suggestions, offer feedback and offer praise. Please support us and come along on 2 November to make your voice heard and learn about available medical services.

If you can't make it and read this before the event takes place, you can email your questions or comment to bpspatientgroup@gmail.com and your points will be put to the panel.

PATIENT ACCESS SURVEY

Thanks to everyone who took the trouble to complete this Survey sent out by Text/SMS. The response was fantastic, 15% of registered patients, the highest ever achieved by BPS we think. The Patient Group will be involved in analysing the replies, taking a particular interest in the detail of the free text replies.

BPS is one of the few practices in Wandsworth offering mixed access (telephone/online/and in person) – most others have switched to online access only. This is a prized service but it is important to extend online use in order not to overload the phone service and allow for more efficient use of Care Navigators' time.

The form will be sent out again in the new year with the hope of BPS being able to show an improvement. This might be thought a nuisance but a lot of money depends on it, so do help by submitting your comments. We are aware of the danger of Survey Overload - but the NHS ties much of its funding to feedback, so your patience would be really appreciated.

RELAUNCH OF THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY TEST

We also draw your attention to the importance of regular feedback via the weirdly-named Friends and Family Test (regular readers will spot our dislike of the name but unfortunately NHS England decided to stick with it when it relaunched the scheme after



Covid). However, the good news is the new forms are clear and to the point. Starting now, patients will receive a text asking for comments after every appointment. (You can, if you prefer, pick up a form at reception.) You will be asked to rate the service and to highlight what was good and what could be improved. This is a direct way of raising issues with the Practice and the Patient Group will be involved in analysing the results. It really is worth your time in giving honest feedback, both positive and less complimentary since ours is a listening Practice.

PATIENT GROUP AWARENESS WEEK (6 - 13 JUNE 2023)

You may have seen members of the Patient Group (PG) handing out questionnaires in the waiting room. We were trying to find out if patients are aware of the work the PG does on behalf of patients, what subjects would draw patients in for education talks, how patients contact the Surgery and whether there was an appetite for more help for getting on-line for patient services (such as training, telephone support). We asked about highpoints and low points of service. While we did not have a large number of responses, a few things emerged:

- The Patient Group is not well known and few patients think of contacting us
- Womens' issues were identified as the most pressing topics of interest
- Most patients prefer to contact the Surgery via the telephone or in person
- There is interest in training sessions for online services

VACCINATION CLINIC

There have been two combined flu and covid vaccination clinics at the Surgery and so far nearly 1500 patients over 65 and vulnerable patients have been invited to attend the clinic. To simplify matters, the age for flu jabs has been lowered this year to 65 to align with covid policy and to ensure maximum protection is achieved. The Patient Group has been involved in marshalling with other volunteers. BPS staff worked hard to iron out any delays; the process has been streamlined and is now much quicker.

Any one eligible who has missed out can still contact the Surgery and make an appointment directly.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

As part of our series highlighting the different roles of staff at the Surgery, here is an account of the wonderful work carried out by our Social Prescriber. Michele writes:

The Challenges and Rewards of Being a Social Prescribing Link Worker

The role of Social Prescriber is varied to say the least. The essence of my job is straightforward: I aim to connect patients to local community and voluntary services that provide a range of wonderful and caring support networks right here in Wandsworth. My role is pivotal, a friendly point of contact to jointly develop a plan with the aim of enabling patients to take greater control of their lives outside the strictly medical scene and tackle together the things that drag them down. Hence Social Prescription; I am not a doctor or therapist and I do not offer medical support.

Once the GP or health professional has referred a patient to me, I will call within a week to make a face-to-face appointment and I then try to see patients within seven to ten days. I work from 9 am to 5 pm on Tuesdays Thursdays and Fridays. Usually, I see people face-to-face for six or more half-hour appointments which gives scope to really work through problems together rather than simply offer a quick fix. Having time to build up a relationship and being able to offer continuing support on a practical level is reassuring for patients and key to our success.



These days I see a lot of people with housing and financial problems. I can help by putting patients in touch with local housing organisations where they receive practical help or I can direct them towards agencies such as the Citizens Advice for benefit checks or appropriate legal advice. On a practical level, perhaps someone has been putting off writing to the Council so we might sit down and do this together. Another group needing help are patients with low-level mental health issues. I might refer them to either Talk Wandsworth or offer more suitable mental health options such as bereavement counselling, meditation classes or perhaps advising on techniques which can be used at home. Isolation is another all too frequent factor and we can look for social activities, such as a gardening club or a choir to provide vital social connection. If someone is feeling low, maybe we can find a chair-yoga class that doesn't cost the earth. Once we've identified the need we can look for a solution.

Here are a couple of examples to show the range of support I can offer. Recently, I saw a young Afghan man in his twenties who had found himself on the streets. I contacted the Wandsworth Council homeless prevention team, 'Street-life,' and chased up various contacts at housing associations and the council until he was housed – he is currently in temporary housing and whilst he was deemed not a priority, he now has a support team around him to ensure he doesn't find himself in this predicament again. In the current housing crisis, such success stories are rare but I am deeply committed to ensuring that they become more common. Another case involved a young, blind woman who was over-whelmed by her garden. I put her in touch with two local charities, Beautify Balham and Goodgym, who harness the skills of local volunteers by putting them in touch with members of the community in need of help and now her garden is under control and blooming. A heart-warming story which made my day.

SHINGLES

Shingles is a viral infection that is immensely painful and is difficult to treat which can leave you with permanent nerve damage. It is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. Nine out of ten people have had chickenpox are therefore at some risk of developing shingles later in life. Shingles cannot be caught from others with shingles (but you can catch chicken pox from someone with shingles) and fortunately most people never suffer from it. The risks of developing shingles become greater as we age and also if your immune system has been lowered because of stress, illness or treatments. There have been some important recent developments in vaccines and on 1 September 2023 the NHS extended the age group and eligibility criteria to more people. Our GPs at BPS strongly urge you to take up the offer of a vaccine when it is offered. The shingles vaccine is available all year round and you should be invited automatically once you turn the relevant age.

The NHS offers two types of vaccine. Zostavax was introduced about 10 years ago and is currently offered to people between the ages of 70 to 79. (This is a live vaccine and should not be administered to those who have a very weakened immunity). A newer vaccine called Shingrix is now available and will be offered to those eligible from the 1st of September 2023.

From now on, most people will become eligible for a shingles vaccine once they reach age 65 following 1st September 2023 and they will remain eligible until they turn 80. However, if you have a severely weakened immune system, you will be eligible for the newer vaccine from the age of 50 onwards, with no upper age limit.

If you turned 65 before 1st September 2023 you'll have to wait until you turn 70 to be eligible for vaccination (unless your immune system is weakened).



Those eligible this coming year, born between the 1st of September 1958 and the 31st of August 1959 will be offered the Shingrix vaccine. This is delivered in two doses that you can have between six and twelve months apart.

If you have a severely weakened immune system, then you would have two doses closer together between eight weeks and six months apart (Initially to use up available stocks) those who are aged between 70 and 79 will be offered the single dosed Zostavax (those with weakened immunity will be offered the Shingrix vaccine instead.

In summary, it is advisable to get the vaccine when it is offered because it will reduce the chance of your getting shingles and it will reduce the chance of developing serious complications if you are unlucky enough to get shingles.

For more information on the vaccine click [here](#). For more information on shingles click [here](#).

TRINITY ROAD MEDICAL CENTRE

Many of you will know that this local practice closed recently and many of the patients have registered with BPS. Under NHS rules, the Practice has no choice but to take on new patients to avoid incurring penalties. The feedback from new patients is this has been achieved efficiently but unfortunately it may impact on waiting times.

READING LIST

This month we recommend *Just One Thing* by Dr Michael Mosely which offers practical tips for small adjustments to help us towards a healthier life. Its available either as podcast (free to listen) or as a book. Click [here](#)

Q & A SECTION – PATIENTS' QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY BPS STAFF

Q. I am hearing impaired and so I find it's almost impossible to take phone calls. Moreover, I do not have a Smart phone, consequently I cannot receive long texts. I have asked the Surgery to contact me by email but this does not seem to be happening.

A. Our IT systems don't lend themselves to personalized messaging. In the first instance we recommend that if you experience problems of this sort you contact the Surgery to make sure your preferences are up to date. If you continue to have difficulties over communications then write to Jo Foley (Business Manager) who will look into setting up an arrangement that works for you.

Q. I have a serious neurological condition and I would like it to be easier to see the same doctor.

A. This is understandable. We suggest you discuss this with your GP to see if you qualify for the PACT (Proactive Care Team) arrangements. This is a professional team of health workers who help adults with complex health problems to live more positively in the present, and to face the challenges of tomorrow with more confidence.

We are here to represent you and we look forward to hearing from you. Do get in touch with your comments on this Bulletin, with suggestions for improvements to health care and requests for information about the Patient Group by emailing us at bpspatientgroup@gmail.com

Note. Any patient registered with BPS can attend PG meetings held on the second Thursday of the month at 6pm. We have returned to meeting in person at the Surgery so do come along or you can still take part via Zoom by making use of the recurring link [here](#). Everyone is very welcome.

