



# Chapel Row Surgery - Patient Participation Group

**Meeting Held on Tuesday 10 September 2024 @ 7:30pm**

<b>Present:</b>	Barry Dickens (Chair)	Dr Lennox (GP)	
	Lesley Windmill	Paul Gomm (Practice Manager)	
	Elaine Wells		
	Edgar Valentine	Carol Gower	
	Julia Baker	Glen Higgins	

## Action

### APOLOGIES:

- Michele Walker sends her apologies as she is unable to attend this meeting
- Rosemary Balsdon sends her apologies as she is unable to attend this meeting

### MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true representation of that meeting.

### MATTERS ARISING:

- There were no matters arising.

### AGENDA ITEMS:

#### Doctors' Strike Action & Appointment Capping

- Barry Dickens (BD) asked Dr Lennox for his comments on how the much talked about Doctors' Strike and potential resulting Appointment Capping might affect Chapel Row Surgery.
- Dr Lennox replied to say that there are no plans for the Doctors at Chapel Row Surgery to join the planned "Collective Action" and there are no

plans for “Appointment Capping” at Chapel Row Surgery, as this is not considered to be helpful towards our patients.

- Dr Lennox advised the practice is coping well with current patient demand and that our daily triage of patient enquiries (triage being the preliminary assessment of patients in order to determine the urgency of their need for treatment and the nature of treatment required) is working effectively and efficiently at Chapel Row Surgery.
- Dr Lennox explained that the practice has been using an electronic triage system via the Practice Website for some years now and the majority of our patient enquiries and requests are handled electronically.
  - This ensures that the patient’s request is not misunderstood or misinterpreted, as it may be via a phone call and
  - We have a clear and auditable record of each patient request, which we can refer back to if needed.
- The daily triage of electronic patient requests is handled by all 3 GP Partners, so that all requests are seen and allocated by a senior clinician.
- This ensures a timely, safe and responsive service for our patients.
- Edgar Valentine (EV) asked if Nurses could operate the triage system, thus freeing up more time for Doctors to see patients.
- Dr Lennox said that the most efficient and effective system is for the most senior clinician to triage patient requests, so that the patient is seen by the most suitable clinician first time, which is better for the patient and the most effective use of practice resources.
  
- Dr Lennox advised that there are more modern electronic patient request handling systems than our current system and these new systems often make use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist with the triage process.
- Dr Lennox said that Chapel Row Surgery has held off adopting a system which uses AI, as our current system works very well for the practice, but that the new AI based Triage systems may well be the future of healthcare in the NHS.
- At Chapel Row Surgery we also have Foundation Trainee Doctors, who are the sort of Doctor many patients would initially see in a Hospital, and these Foundation Trainee Doctors are always fully supervised by the GP Partners at the surgery.
- BD asked if there has been much “push back” from patients who prefer not to see a trainee doctor and Dr Lennox replied to say this has happened very occasionally and rarely and in fact the Trainee’s perspective on a patient’s request can often provide another view on the problem, which is helpful for patients and internal training alike.
  
- Dr Lennox advised that the NHS is currently pushing for all practices to provide full access to on-line patient requests throughout the core working hours for every GP Practice, 8.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday.
- Dr Lennox advised that currently the “Ask a Doctor a Question” facility via the surgery website is switched off at lunchtime to enable the doctors to manage the patient requests received and see patients in the afternoons.
- The Practice could leave all on-line patient request facilities on all day, but then Doctors would spend all day triaging, and this would reduce the time available for Doctors to see patients. We feel the current balance helps patients and the practice.
- However, if challenged on this by the NHS centrally, Dr Lennox said that we may need to ask for the support of the Patient Participation Group for the system we are using.

### **Surgery Developments:**

- We discussed the recent 3-yearly review of dispensing patients by the NHS and the fact that the “1 mile rule” within the NHS regulations, must be adhered to by all dispensing practices.
- The “1 mile rule” is that any patient who lives within 1 mile (or 1.6km) of the nearest chemist from the patient’s house, in a direct line (“as the crow flies”) is NOT eligible for Dispensing and must obtain their medications from a pharmacy / chemist.
- The “1 mile rule”, which was created to protect chemists, means that for some patients at Chapel Row Surgery, the practice can no longer dispense medications to them and patients must be given a prescription form to take to a pharmacy / chemist of their choice.
- Understandably this is not always a popular situation, but something the Practice must adhere to or face fines of potentially thousands of pounds for breaking the NHS Dispensing regulations.

### **Patient Panel feedback**

- BD advised that there is not much to feed back from the most recent Patient Panel Meeting.
- We did discuss patient demographics at Chapel Row Surgery and Paul Gomm, Practice Manager was asked to provide the percentage of patients aged 65 years and over at Chapel Row Surgery, as there was a thought that the practice has a high percentage of older patients and this might impact the demographics of the practice.
- PSG reports as at 11 September 2024 the practice has 8,888 registered patients and of this total:
  - Aged 0 to 29 years of age = 3,270 patients = 36.79%
  - Aged 60 years and over = 2,472 patients = 27.81%
  - Aged 70 years and over = 1,306 patients = 14.69%
- Dr Lennox advised the practice population is also weighted by a range of factors which includes, age, medical conditions and deprivation and that the practice “weighted population” is larger than the actual numbers of patients registered with the practice.

### **North East Thatcham Housing Development**

- BD has attended a great deal of housing planning meetings relevant to this housing development in the past few years, in his capacity as Bucklebury Parish Council Chair and BD reported:
  1. The number of new houses which West Berkshire Council has to make available has doubled from 525 dwellings to 1,040 dwellings per year, following the recent review by the new Labour Government.
  2. The North East Thatcham Housing Development is now back to the original 2,500 houses.
  3. The developers of the North East Thatcham Housing plan have confirmed that they will be able to make a more significant contribution to the housing estate facilities with 2,500 homes, than they would have done if the development were 1,500 homes.
  4. The revised Plans for the Housing development now need to be re-presented to West Berkshire Council for consideration and adoption

by April 2025 and therefore it is considered unlikely that any new houses will be available before 2028/29 at the earliest.

- BD advised that the local Member of Parliament will be making a visit to the area in 2 weeks time and BD will be part of the Bucklebury Parish Council delegation who will meet and talk to the MP.
- West Berkshire Council are considering other location options of additional housing.
- There is almost no possibility of a bridge being constructed over the Thatcham rail level crossing as part of the local housing developments proposed.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

### **Practice Customer Service:**

- EV advised that he is very pleased with the service he has received recently at the practice and in particular the friendly, helpful assistance he received from Sarah at Reception.
- Lesley Windmill (LW) said that she has recently been able to change GP Surgeries and join Chapel Row Surgery as a registered patient and LW feels the Customer service from Chapel Row Surgery is “a breath of fresh air” compared to the GP Practice she was registered at before.
- Dr Lennox thanked both for their comments which are always welcome and will be shared with the staff.

### **Red / Amber / Green Patients**

- Glen Higgins (GH) asked if Chapel Row Surgery are adopting this patient rating system.
- Dr Lennox replied to say that Chapel Row Surgery have already categorised our patients using this system some time ago, but we are not currently actively using the rating system.
- The Red / Amber / Green rating system seeks to “rate” patients according to medical need - Red = highest need and Green = occasional use of NHS and low need.
- Dr Lennox advised that the AI patient Triage systems he spoke about earlier rely on the Red / Amber / Green rating of patients to triage patients towards appropriate clinicians for assessment and treatment.
- AI systems will make use of Primary Care Hubs to direct typical “Green” rated patients towards, if their local GP Practice is overwhelmed with patient demand.

### **Same Day Access**

- Dr Lennox spoke about the NHS drive towards Same Day Access for all patients and the increasing use of Patient Care Hubs to enable this.
- A Patient Care Hub is an extended Primary Care setting designed to see patients before they go into Secondary Care - Hospitals.
- Dr Lennox advised that a Primary Care Hub is being developed in Reading, using the existing “Walk In Centre” and a facility at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading.
- Dr Lennox advised that this is the only Primary Care Hub in our area currently, although there are ambitions to provide more Hubs for the West Berkshire and Wokingham areas in 2025.

**New Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading Location**

- There was a brief discussion about the early discussion plans to build a new hospital for Reading and to move the Royal Berkshire Hospital to a new purpose-built site - perhaps at Green Park in Reading, just off Junction 12 of the M4 motorway.
- GH thought she had heard that these plans have already been considered and delayed until the 2030s. (This was reported in the Reading Chronicle newspaper in July 2023).

Meeting closed at 8:15pm

**AGREED ACTION POINTS:**

<b><u>TOPIC</u></b>	<b><u>AGREED ACTION</u></b>
NONE	NONE

**END OF MEETING MINUTES**