

Launceston Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Minutes of the meeting 7 August, 2018, at Launceston Medical Centre

1. Welcome

Vice-chairman Les took the chair in the absence of Joan. He welcomed Caroline Gist, Operations Manager at the Medical Centre, who answered questions from members about the running of the Centre.

Q: Can the reception desk open at 8.15am?

A: The desk used to open at 8.15am but there were more complaints then because patients from outlying areas could not get in by that time. It was decided to adopt the fairest system for everybody and open at 8.30.

Q: Can more people be on hand at 8.30am to see/assist patients?

A: We actually open the doors at 8.20am and now there are two Arrivee machines, the pressure is reduced. There is a member of staff on hand to help people who are not used to the Arrivee machines.

Q: Can the outer door be opened earlier so that patients arriving early can get shelter from the weather?

A: Unfortunately, the inner door is not lockable so that is not practical.

Andy said that the question of a canopy at the entrance had cropped up several times in the current consultations and it was being considered for the new build.

Q: Do the receptionists have any form of 'customer care' training so they can help patients who have difficulty expressing themselves when seeking help with complicated/intimate issues? Does the receptionist have the patient's history on screen?

A: The receptionists undergo comprehensive training, but the patient's history is not available to them on screen; that is confidential information. There is a private area where patients can go to talk with somebody in confidence if they are not comfortable at reception. Yesterday, a Monday, there were 941 contact with the Medical Centre. Although not all of them will have spoken to a receptionist, that shows the volume of phone traffic for the Centre and why, sometimes, receptionists need to close a call.

Andy said the pattern of calls would be analysed to see if could help plan the workload.

Q: What happens when somebody takes a long time at reception and a queue builds up?

A: At busy periods, there are two receptionists at the desk, otherwise, if there are more than 2 patients waiting, then another receptionist is called to help.

Q: Is there a PALS system for patient advice and liaison?

A: No, but there is a straightforward complaints procedure.

Q: Will there be more receptionists once the building expansion is completed? Will there be more phone lines?

A: The complement will remain the same at first, but will expand as needed. There are currently six telephone lines and the capacity will be increased with the new telephone system.

Q: How do you handle compliments and do you acknowledge them?

A: We pass them on to the relevant people/teams but don't acknowledge them.

Q: How do people know they got through if you don't acknowledge them?

A: That's something we could look at. We have a huge number of temporary residents at this time of year and the feedback is very positive when they compare us with their local area.

Q: Why can't patients make a routine appointment to see a doctor or nurse in three months' time?

A: The limit for advance appointments is two months because experience has shown that after that period there problems start to arise with holidays, changes to days off, etc.

Q: How is the amount of space for parking calculated?

A: The NHS allows three spaces for clinician.

Caroline was warmly thanked for her helpful and informative briefing.

2. Those present and apologies

Present: Les Whaley, Frances Tippett, Cym Downing, Jo Keogh (assistant secretary), Joan Dinham, Pam Davey, Maureen Amy, Patty Taylor (secretary), Dawn Rogers, Paul Ford, Gill Brown, and Dave Gordon.

Apologies: Liz L'estrange-West, Joan Heaton, Steve Dymond, and Rosemary Bromwich.

3. Minutes of July minutes and matters arising

Minute 7 - Proposal that Medical Centre needs a dementia nurse.

Paul reported that his enquiries had show that the East Cornwall GPs (including Launceston) had opted not to have a community dementia nurse and instead opted for an enhanced CPTF.

Frances said that as Launceston was clearly not receiving an enhanced service, and she would take the matter up.

Frances, Paul and Cym to pursue the matter

Minute 9 - It was agreed that a doctor would be most welcome at a meeting.

The minutes were agreed unanimously.

4. Practice Manager's Update

There was nothing new to report on the expansion plan since the July meeting.

Andy to try to arrange Peter Harper to join next PPG meeting via webcam

PPG members and patient issues and complaints.

Andy said that while PPG members might be approached by patients to follow-up specific complaints, this was not a satisfactory route because medical centre staff cannot discuss patients' issues with third parties. The problem needed to be taken up directly with staff at the centre.

Gil asked whether there was a system allowing patients to have advocates.

Andy replied that if a patient told the Medical Centre that he/she wanted a member of the PPG to assist them to sort out an issue, then that would be acceptable.

Payment for letters written by doctors.

Les asked whether there was a list of charges for doctors writing letters on behalf of patients to outside bodies. Andy said there was a standard charge of £24 because the practice engaged a doctor from outside the practice to carry out those duties. He said patients were encouraged to use a printout of their consultations whenever appropriate because there was no cost for that.

5. Building project group update

Group leader Les reported that members had been busy over the summer promoting the plans for the medical centre expansion and that the next meeting for members of the building project group would be 3 September.

6, 7, and 8. Health directory group, youth project group and funding/election of treasurer were deferred until the September meeting of the full PPG.

9. Why are GPs from Callington providing cover at Launceston Hospital rather than those from Launceston?

Andy explained that a range of issues contributed to the decision by the Launceston Medical Centre not to provide cover at the hospital. These included prioritising services at the medical centre, operational needs and the fact that many of the hospital patients had specific needs.

10. Directional signs for drivers/walkers to the Medical Centre

During the consultation, patients had raised concerns about the proposed one-way system for the Medical Centre because other users of Landlake Road and the hospital road will still have to use those thoroughfares as two-way roads. That could well cause confusion for patients using the medical centre and expecting all traffic to be one-way.

Andy to raise the point with Peter

Maureen asked why there were no signs in the town with directions to the Medical Centre. Dave replied that was a matter for the council's highways department.

11. Little Red Bus

Les reported that he and Joan were concerned about the future of the Little Red Bus which provided such an important service in transporting passengers from outside town into Launceston; particularly the effect on patients without other means of transport. He had heard that there were other parties interested in taking it over and that there would be a public meeting on 15 August.

Dave said that four groups had formally expressed an interest. Two had already made presentations to the bus committee - Age UK and Holsworthy Community Transport - and two more were scheduled to take place - Wadebridge Community Transport and Gateway to New Life. The Red Bus was not run by the town council although the town council had a representative on the committee. Dave said the Red Bus service as currently operated was not sustainable but he was confident that it would be taken over and would be run on a business footing with new blood and new ideas.

12. Any Other Business

Les reported that Cornwall Council was in the process of buying the land at Scarne Cross (beside Kernow House) for a supported housing scheme. Both he and the chairwoman were concerned that the land was not the appropriate spot for supported housing and that it would be better used for parking for medical centre staff and visitors to Kernow House.

Jo said that putting housing on the site would compound the access problems to Landlake Road.

Dawn said she thought the land was designed to be a green space beside Kernow House. Dave said that he understood the land was owned by the Gilbard Trust and that the issue needed to be sorted with Mrs Dorothy Davey and the trust.

Frances made the point that there was a clear need for supported housing in Launceston and the proposed location was close to the medical centre.

Les offered to contact the Gilbard Trust and explore the matter further.

13. Date of next meeting

The next full meeting of the PPG will be at 6pm on 10 September at the Medical Centre. (The next meeting of the building group will be on 3 September - members of the group only.)

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.45pm.