

QUANTOCK MEDICAL CENTRE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT NETHER STOWEY LIBRARY Wednesday 7th December 2016

PRESENT

Diane Faris (Chair), Helen Stacey (Practice Manager), Bruce Roper, Janet Russ, Terry Binding, Louise Darwent, Maggie Harlow, Bertie Shire, Eric Coates, Pam Henry, Alison Hoare (Village Agent), Ian Faris (Minutes)

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Kate Hope. Janet said that Mary Reece would like to join and gave Helen contact details.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (September 2016)

Read and accepted.

MATTERS ARISING

Terry offered to attend future PPG Chairs meetings, subject to availability.

UPDATE FROM QUANTOCK MEDICAL CENTRE

Dr. David Matthews has now retired and his leaving party was well attended. He remains the owner of the premises.

Since then, surgeries have been held by Dr. Klein one day each week and our preferred locum, Dr. Hans Hermann Benischke, three days each week. Dr. Benischke tends to spend a little longer with patients and continues to prove very popular so his hours have been extended accordingly.

Nursing coverage continues to be problematic. A locum, Elaine, has been covering Fridays and Nurse Helen will meet with her next week to help with her integration, but this is an expensive interim solution. Urine tests are proving particularly problematic, largely because of the volume (of patients). Helen is exploring ways to resolve this, Telehealth for recurrent UTIs being one.

Janet passed to Helen some publicity material regarding social care provision and suggested putting a note in the Quantock Messenger regarding upcoming PPG meetings and events. Social Services Drop-Ins are being provided at the Church Centre on the 2nd Tuesday in every month. Alison can visit those who are unable to get to the Centre.

DIABETES AWARENESS EVENT

Attempts are being made to reduce costs e.g. by providing cheaper test strips. The problem is that the surgery has no control over the types of machine issued to patients, so they will organise a patient educational session in the new year and invite patients to change their monitors and receive education and training to support this..

VILLAGE RESUS TRAINING

As past events have been well attended this will now be held annually. Book sales help to mitigate the cost. The next event is planned for February.

TALK AND DISCUSSION WITH VILLAGE AGENT ALISON HOARE ON LONELINESS

Last summer, Somerset County Council organised an Isolation and Loneliness Conference to help highlight the issues involved. Often the two issues are combined, but not always.

Currently 29% of the county population is aged 65+ years, a figure expected to double in the next 20 years. For various reasons, however, people in their 40s and 50s are at the greatest risk from loneliness. It is a difficult problem to tackle because the issues are complex, the combination of each individual's personality and circumstances being unique.

Loneliness can also be a physical health issue, in some cases equivalent to smoking up to 15 cigarettes per day and Helen agreed with Alison that suggestions that up to 40% of surgery patients could have underlying reasons for attendance were not unreasonable.

Due to lack of funding, both issues are being tackled largely by volunteers e.g. groups like Contact The Elderly. The biggest hurdle, at present, is communication. Janet suggested that the "digital age" is not helping many people e.g. those unfamiliar with or with no access to computers/smart phones etc. although libraries do provide a service, often with advice/tuition. Friends Of Nether Stowey Library are currently looking into such provision for the village. Alison invited contact from anyone with ideas that might help.

HEALTH SERVICES IN SOMERSET - UPDATE

Cost savings are being sought to help reduce the currently massive budget deficit and many alternative approaches to healthcare provision are being trialled in various areas. The Quantock Medical Centre already provides a degree of holistic care. The number of specialities requiring new pathways to treatment and requiring separate funding are being increased. Patient education is required to enable this new approach to succeed.

Helen distributed a couple of leaflets listing medications and treatment products which will no longer be funded by the NHS and, therefore, no longer available on prescription. All are available for purchase over the counter from pharmacies in equivalent strengths. There will, however, be issues with certain medications e.g. the legal limit imposed on the amount of painkillers that can be purchased over the counter by any one person at any one time.

Eric suggested that Helen contact Nigel Phillips regarding volunteers to deliver medication to patients who cannot get to the dispensary.

Bruce mentioned that the Somerset NHS long-term plan includes the desire to do away with small dispensing practices. All agreed, however, that, whilst larger, merged practices may be more efficient and effective in large urban areas, they are not suitable or desirable for rural areas where the population is more dispersed and Helen pointed out that practice mergers only make economic sense when there is no other viable alternative for survival.

Lack of support in the community of carers is, according to Alison, behind the decision by Musgrove Hospital to open a ward purely for rehabilitating patients, with no medical staff provided. She did say, however, that the number of services available in this genre is increasing.

Bruce has received an e-mail from NHS Yeovil regarding services available via remote/mobile devices. His work collating responses to the Nether Stowey Development Plan consultation has revealed an overwhelming desire for improved local mobile telephone network coverage. A planning application has been submitted by Vodaphone to Somerset County Council for a mast to be erected by the recreation ground in Nether Stowey but a number of objections have been lodged already, mainly by certain residents of Bishops Close. He invited all who would like mobile network coverage for the village to be improved to express their support for the application on the council website.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Eric outlined some of the facilities/services available for disabled people using tablets and other similar IT devices. He also expressed his satisfaction with the service provided by the physiotherapist (Jenny) at Bridgwater Hospital.

Volunteer walk leaders are needed. Anyone interested should contact Helen.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 1st March 2017 at Nether Stowey Library, followed by 7th June, 6th September and 6th December.