



Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead Patient Participation Group forum

22 February 2020

About the forum

Over recent years, Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead have received requests for help to support and develop patient participation groups (PPG) from patient member and GP practices. We prioritised developing effective PPGs in our 2019–2020 work plan and as part of this work launched our Participation in Practice award. However, this only allowed us to support 12 PPGs as part of the initial pilot and we were aware that there was interest from other groups to get involved. So, we decided to launch a forum for PPG members.

We decided to hold the first meeting on a Saturday morning, to try to make it more accessible to a wide range of PPG members. As the forum was to cover both Gateshead and Newcastle, we opted for a central location with good transport links and offered to support people with transport costs and/or taxi travel if this was required.

The agenda for the first meeting was set by Healthwatch, based on issues raised as part of the Participation in Practice award, and on discussions with various PPG members. We also wanted to make sure that:

- a) The forum was wanted and needed
- b) The forum, if continued, would meet the need of PPG members

So, we made time to discuss the possible future format and content of the forum meetings.

The agenda was:

1. Welcome and introduction
2. What is a Patient Participation Group?
3. The Participation in Practice award
4. The Healthwatch PPG forum – what should it be?

Thirty people registered to attend. While some were unable to attend on the day, other people attended and did not register; thirty people in total attended the forum meeting.

What is a patient participation group?

Steph Edusei, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead, spoke to the forum about the purpose of PPGs. She explained that PPGs became part of the contract in 2015 but additional funding for PPGs was removed at the same time.

The purpose of PPGs was described as:

- Being a critical friend to the practice
- Advising on the patient perspective and giving insight into services
- Encouraging patients to take greater responsibility in their health
- Researching the views of people who use the practice
- Staying in regular contact with the patient population
- Organising health promotion and health literacy¹ events
- Working in partnership with the GP practice

Attendees then discussed the role of PPGs in small groups, facilitated by a Healthwatch staff member.

1. Varying experiences of being a PPG member

Some attendees talked about being in a PPG, that meets bi-monthly and has an active membership of 12 people.

Others reported being part of less active PPGs including virtual groups, described as a talking shop or a mailing list

2. Involvement of practice staff and partners

Most of the small groups mentioned the importance of the involvement and attitude of practice staff and partners.

- Many felt that having a GP attending the meetings was helpful, or perhaps a different GP depending on what they were looking at and the specialism of the GP
- The importance of practices welcoming and valuing their groups was stressed
- Many mentioned a feeling of apathy coming from practices and particularly from GPs
- There was a suggestion that GPs see it as more work and already feel overwhelmed/overworked. They need to be persuaded that it would be beneficial to them.

“We suggest improvements, but nothing happens, no minutes are taken at meetings and there’s no plan.”

“PPGs have gone off the boil with practices. They were once a priority but not anymore.”

“It worked great in the beginning but we’re now losing heart and don’t want to go to meetings.”

¹ About health literacy <https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/jonathan-berry>



3. The wider role of PPGs

There was lots of interest in the broader role of PPGs particularly:

- Supporting practices to map/understand local groups, clubs and wellbeing ideas and activities
- Health promotion – making the NHS a health service rather than a sickness service
- Supporting improvement in health literacy

4. Membership of PPGs

Many of the small groups discussed challenges with getting a more diverse membership of PPGs.

- Getting people from different age groups and backgrounds involved is hard
- Some practices find that people from different ages and ethnicities attend one meeting but drop out if there are not positive/clear outcomes

5. Contractual requirement to have a PPG

There was some interest in the fact that GP Practices are contractually required to have a PPG.

- Some felt that the requirement should be quality assured and monitored to see how the PPG meets the requirements/impact of the PPG
- There was a feeling that there was a lack of accountability with no sanctions applied
One group found the point about practices involving their patients' carers in the PPG interesting were planning to talk to their practice about it

The Participation in Practice award

Lyndsay Yarde presented an update on the Participation in Practice award. This included a brief background of why the award had been developed and details about the practices involved:

Newcastle

Throckley
Cruddas Park
Westerhope
Grainger
Newcastle Medical
Denton Turret
Dilston

Gateshead

Bridges
Teams
Fell Cottage
Oxford Terrace and Rawling Rd
Birtley

Lyndsay explained that we expect around half the participating practices to complete the award and be assessed in April and the remainder to complete in September 2020. We will hold an awards ceremony event in October to celebrate the achievements and share best practice and learning.

The Healthwatch PPG forum – what should it be?

Steph Edusei asked the attendees to discuss the idea of a Healthwatch PPG forum and gave the following as prompts for discussion:

- Should we have a forum?
- What should it be like?
- How often?
- Where and when?
- Could we use different formats?

1. Should we have a forum?

There was a unanimous yes to this question.

2. What should it be like?

What will we do?

- An opportunity to share good practice
- An opportunity to hear from those PPG that work well and find out how they do it
- A chance to gather views about services for Healthwatch
- A way to promote Healthwatch in the practice
- Creating shared information, e.g. written info about PPGs that all practices could share with patients
- Time to mix and chat (networking between PPGs)
- A way to identify trends and hotspots
- Hear about the issues facing practices, new initiatives and roles
- Perhaps have meeting themes that are solution focussed

- Half the meeting could be dedicated to a speaker, the other half made up on discussions and general business
- Sharing of ideas and training on things like recruitment, how to set up a PPG, how to manage/work with the group, working digitally, training on specific issues (as and when needed), support for speaking up/confidence building

How should it run?

- Would prefer Healthwatch to facilitate and administer the forum
- The forum should be informal with facilitators
- Member can run parts of the meetings
- Discussion around small tables is helpful
- An action log to take things forward when needed
- Send advance notice of agenda and discussion items so that they can be discussed with the PPG members

Who should attend?

- Part of the meeting should be open to professionals but not all of it
- Should it be open to any members of a PPG or just a small number who represent their PPG?

3. How often?

- Quarterly

4. When and where?

- Should include some Saturdays so that younger people and working people can attend (not evenings)
- Meetings need to be held in a central location (people liked Brunswick, but others felt it was too far to travel)
- Forums should be for Newcastle and Gateshead and venue should alternate

5. Could we use different formats?

- There was a definite preference for face to face meetings
- People felt that a virtual group could supplement the face to face group - to engage with people who cannot meet and young people, as well as allowing discussion to flow between meetings

The next meeting of the PPG forum is on 20 May 2020, between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm, at Family Gateshead.

Ideas for agenda items should be sent to info@healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk by 2 April 2020

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle are part of Tell Us North CIC
company no. 1039496