

PPG Meeting 21/05/25

We recently met with members of our Patient Participation Group (PPG) to review how our new systems are working and to gather feedback. Below is a summary of the key points discussed.

Using SystemConnect for Requests

We reviewed how patients are using SystemConnect, our online request system. The team demonstrated how requests are submitted and who is using the service.

Key points:

- The system continues to bring major benefits for both patients and the practice, especially by reducing time spent waiting on the phone.
- Many patients have found the tutorial video helpful and easy to follow.
- Demand is carefully managed each day, and there is a limit to how many requests can be safely handled.
- Some patients will always need or prefer to use the telephone, and this remains available.
- Patients who are very unwell should still call the practice or, in emergencies, dial 999.

Capacity and Access

We discussed how capacity varies throughout the week and how quickly online slots are usually filled.

Average times when online capacity is reached:

- **Monday:** 12:40
- **Tuesday:** 11:12
- **Wednesday:** 10:46
- **Thursday:** 12:37
- **Friday:** 12:01

Additional points:

- Some appointment slots are reserved for community teams, paramedics, and nursing homes.
- Staffing levels vary depending on the rota and bank holidays.
- All clinicians now work from online requests, but patients are still contacted by phone once their request is reviewed.

Telephone Access and Call Handling

We discussed recent challenges with telephone access and the steps being taken to improve it.

Key points:

- Recruitment for reception roles has become increasingly difficult, and the team has reduced in size over the past year.
- Abuse towards staff has contributed to retention issues.
- To improve call handling, the practice is partnering with **CallCare**, a specialist call-handling service based in Manchester.
- A small number of CallCare staff will begin supporting the practice, with quality and performance closely monitored.
- This approach aims to ensure patients can get through more reliably, especially during busy periods.

Anima: Improving How We Process Hospital Letters

The practice receives around 1,000 pieces of correspondence each week, which must be reviewed and actioned.

To improve safety and efficiency:

- The administrative Workflow Team is trialling **Anima**, an AI tool that summarises hospital letters and highlights key actions.
- This could reduce processing time by around 50%.
- The system is being introduced gradually to ensure accuracy and build trust.
- The practice is also working with hospital departments to encourage standardised outpatient letters, making important information easier to find.

Feedback and Patient Experiences

Several patients shared recent experiences, including:

- Difficulty submitting requests when capacity had already been reached.
- Challenges contacting the practice by phone during busy periods.
- A case where a patient expected follow-up from A&E; the practice confirmed that discharge summaries should include appropriate prescriptions and instructions.

These discussions help us identify where improvements are needed and ensure patient voices shape our services.

Ongoing Improvements

The practice continues to:

- Explore alternative telephone providers due to issues with the current system.
- Work with hospital teams to improve communication and reduce delays.
- Introduce new tools and processes that reduce pressure on staff and improve patient safety.

Closing Remarks

We thank all PPG members for their constructive feedback and ongoing support. Their insights help us continue improving the care and access we provide.