



**Key factors for effective
Patient Participation Groups**

Findings from eight PPG groups
in North Leeds GP practices

December 2016

About us

Healthwatch Leeds is here to help local people get the best out of their local health and care services by bringing their voice to those who plan and deliver services in Leeds.



Healthwatch Leeds is the independent voice of local people for health and social care services in Leeds. We make sure service providers and commissioners - the people who plan and buy health and social care services - listen to the concerns of people and use the information to shape and improve their services.

We work hard to make sure that we include the people whose voices are not usually heard.

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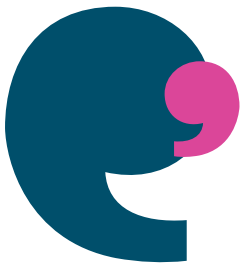
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Why the report has been written

Healthwatch Leeds has been working with colleagues at Leeds North Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on a project around Patient Participation Groups (PPG) in GP practices.

Based on the interviews we carried out with the coordinators, members and patients of eight practices in North Leeds and an additional interview with the One Medical group, we would like to illustrate what people think are the key factors for a well-functioning PPG; showcase what works, including examples of impact and changes through a PPG; identify the challenges they are facing and highlight the support they require. Finally, we will set out our recommendations for development and what should be put in place to support them.

Key Findings

1. There was variation in the eight PPGs' structure and operation methods.

While all used face-to-face meetings, the regularity and outcomes of these differed from group to group. A small proportion of practices used virtual groups to reach larger numbers of patients.

2. Many PPGs have an excellent and productive relationship with their practice. They have made a real positive difference in improving patients' experience in using the service.

3. The key factors for a good and effective PPG:

- A PPG's success depends on it having a clear purpose.
- A PPG's effectiveness relies on strong commitment and transparency from both the practice staff and patients, with shared responsibilities.
- Having innovative approaches to engaging with patients can generate better involvement from wider patient communities. It can also encourage patients to share



their views and shape the improvement of the practice.

4. **The main challenges the PPGs are facing:**

- There is very clear evidence that most PPGs have difficulties communicating with the wider patient community.
- The vast majority of the PPG groups find it challenging to recruit diverse membership, especially young people.
- For a small practice, it is difficult to find time and resources to support and facilitate the PPG.

5. **What support do the PPGs require?**

- The vast majority of the PPGs require the practice to provide admin and promotional support.
- They would also benefit from network meetings with other PPGs from the locality.

Key Recommendations

Based on our findings, we would recommend the following three areas as platforms for development:

1. **Partnership working:**
Form more collaborative partnerships between PPGs and practices which encourage active dialogue and result in good outcomes.
2. **Recruitment, promotion and communication:**
Utilise a full range of communication methods, be innovative with the engagement approach and make links with local groups to reach out to a wider patient community.
3. **Support and resources:**
Raise awareness of the existing support for PPG available in the city. e.g training and network meetings.

For further details, refer to our “Recommendations” on page 12.



Why we did it

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of patients, working in partnership with their GP practice to improve services and to enable patients to look after their own health.

From 1st April 2016, it has been a contractual requirement for all English practices to form a Patient Participation Group.

Most practices in Leeds have a group but the number of participants, frequency of meetings and feedback methods vary. Some work has been undertaken nationally by the National Association for Patient Participation to review how PPGs work but locally only limited work has been carried out.

Healthwatch Leeds has been invited by the Leeds North Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to carry out a project which will help to share what works well in PPGs and where more support may be helpful for them.

What we did

Eight practices in the north Leeds area were selected by Leeds North CCG to give a good variety of size of practice,

demographic of patients and geographic spread for this project.

Healthwatch arranged interviews with the person who coordinated the PPG, the PPG members and the patients of the respective practices.

It has taken three months for all the interviews to be arranged and completed as practice staff who have been nominated were very busy with their day to day duties. Coordinating the PPG is one part of their role and other tasks in the practice often took priority in their working day.

Who we spoke to

We conducted 52 face to face or telephone interviews with staff and patients between August and November 2016.

We spoke to 8 staff who coordinate the PPG in the selected practice; 11 PPG members and 32 patients across these surgeries. The Area Operation Manager of One Medical Group also took part.

The full list of GP practices who have been selected for this project by Leeds North CCG is enclosed in Appendix 1.



The questionnaires we used for each group of interviewees are available on request or can be found on the website with this report.

What we found

1. PPG basic structures and method of operation

Structure of PPGs

- One PPG is set up as a constituted body and governed by a committee.
- Another one has combined the PPG with their Health Champions in the practice.
- Six PPGs have a terms of reference.
- Only two PPGs have roles and job descriptions for members. One PPG coordinator commented that they did not want it to be too formal as this might put people off.

The purpose of the PPG group

- All eight groups agreed that they contribute to the continuous improvement of services and quality of care.
- However, only two groups thought they helped patients to take more responsibility for their health.
- Six groups felt they improved communication between the practice and its patients. They also

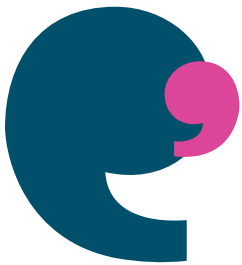
provided practical support for the practice to implement change.

Other things recorded about the purpose of the PPG include:

- Building relationships across the city.
- Giving patients a voice.
- Keeping patients informed of changes in the practice.
- Being a critical friend for the surgery.

Method of Operation

- All eight PPGs have face-to-face meetings and six have a mailing list for those who cannot always be available to attend the meeting.
- Four practices also have an online virtual group with a larger base of patients.
- Four PPGs have face-to-face meetings once every three months. One meets once every two months, and two meet once every six months. One meets three times a year.
- Five PPGs say that more than half of members attend, and another one says less than half attend. One coordinator comments that attendance depends on the extent to which the issue discussed affects patients.



- All eight PPGs communicate with members by email, while three also use post or phone. A few coordinators also meet with PPG members face to face to discuss specific issues.

The coordinators

- All say coordinating the PPG is part of their roles as opposed to their main role. Six of these groups were organised by the Practice Manager.
- Five coordinators spent two or three hours a month on PPG work, whereas for others it is less frequent or on an ad hoc basis. One person spends one hour a week.

The PPG members

- There are various reasons patients join the PPG. The primary motivation is finding out more about the practice and giving patients a voice to influence changes.
- All 11 PPG members we interviewed had been a member for over a year, and some of them have been members up to four years.
- The membership is predominantly

older people who speak fluent English.

- The number of active members generally varies between 2 and 14.
- Three practices also have virtual groups ranging from 75 to 300 people who receive information and minutes of the PPG.

The patients

- The vast majority of patients (27) do not know what a PPG is and 21 people are not aware one exists in their surgery.
- There was very little interest amongst the patients we spoke to join the PPG group in their practice, 22 people show no interest. The main reason was due to time constraints - people were working long hours and busy with family commitments.
- There is more appetite for patients to get involved online. 15 patients we spoke to would be interested in taking part in PPG activities on line.

2. What is already working well in these groups?

- 7 out of 8 PPGs had a clear purpose for their work.



- All PPGs suggested improvements to the practice to make the service better for patients.
 - Some groups have forged a good link with patients to get views from the wider patient group, for example, organising coffee mornings; community-based clubs and activities; an AGM; surveys and utilising social media such as a Facebook page.
 - Many commented on the good relationship between the practice and the PPG, describing it as “fantastic”, “excellent”, “productive” and something they were “proud” of.
 - Many positive changes have been made as a result of the work done by various PPGs. These have included amending the appointment system; contributing to new websites and ensuring information in waiting areas and on noticeboards are clearly displayed.
- the practice are important, and many of them organised the agenda for the PPG meetings.
- Having an independent chair was important to 6 out of 8 coordinators. They would like the patients to take more ownership of the group.
 - All coordinators say having a diverse membership is another important factor, but many point out that they struggle to get younger people to participate.
 - Most of the practices provide admin and promotional support for their PPGs.
 - Having clinical staff involvement is good as they can provide information to PPG members at the meeting. They can also be great promoters of the PPG’s work. Depending on the size of the practice, it may not be possible or necessary for clinical staff to attend every PPG meeting.

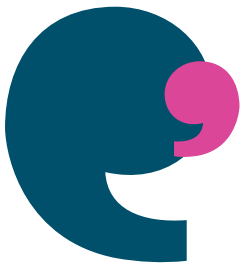
3. What are the key factors for a good and effective PPG?

What the coordinators said

- Having a clear purpose for the PPG is essential to its success.
- All coordinators agreed that agenda items and information from

What the members said

- Members want joint agendas to be developed with their practice.
- Unlike the coordinators, members were less concerned with having an independent chair: less than half thought this was important. Only



three members felt strongly that the group has to be patient-led. There were concerns that a lay member would not have the time to fully commit to the chairperson's role. As long as a meeting is well-chaired and everyone's opinion is heard, they are happy for either a staff member or a patient to take the lead.

- Again, clinical involvement was considered very useful as it allows direct dialogue with the medical team.
- Most groups required admin and promotional support from the practice. Only a couple of patients have taken on the role of writing minutes.
- The members also emphasise the importance of having a diverse membership, however they too express the challenges they are facing in achieving this.

What the patients said

- Although there were very low levels of awareness among patients about the PPG in their practice, 19 patients suggested ways in which they thought the

group could support them and their surgery. This implies that patients' generally believe a PPG can provide a useful service. Patients suggestions for improvements are enclosed in Appendix 2.

4. What challenges are they facing?

What the coordinators said

- 7 out of 8 have not been able to make their membership as diverse as they would like, particularly with regards to attracting younger members.
- Some coordinators commented that staff only had limited time and resources to provide extra support for the PPG.
- A couple of coordinators said it is difficult to get regular patients to commit to meetings.
- Only three groups actively seek views and feedbacks from the wider patient communities of the practice.
- One coordinator said it is difficult to manage the group dynamic in the meeting.



What the members said

- 6 out of 9 respondents said they receive no support to carry out their role. Many appear to be unaware of the support that the CCG offers (see Appendix 3 for full support available in the city).
- The majority of the practices face the challenge of recruiting diverse membership, in particular those from the younger population.
- Some members expressed disappointment that their suggestions are not acted upon and no explanations were provided as to why.
- Language may be a barrier for people from minority ethnic communities to join.

What the patients said

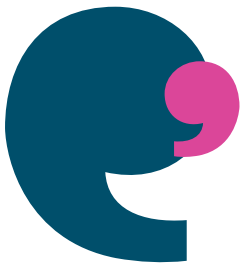
- There is a clear difficulty when it comes to raising patients' awareness of the PPG: only five know what a PPG is, although slightly more (six) know that one exists in their practice.
- Time was the biggest barrier to joining the PPG: work and family commitments often stop patients from getting involved. Only 8 out of the 30 respondents expressed an interest in joining the PPG. Four

patients suggest that flexible meeting times and days would make them more likely to join.

- A few patients mentioned that PPG should actively seek out patients views, in particular those from vulnerable groups.

5. What support have PPG members received?

- Practical assistance from the practice, including admin and promotional support, was available in most practices we interviewed.
- Face-to-face contact can be an effective way of supporting the PPG members in addition to email contact which is used by all PPGs.
- Training and network meetings for other groups in the local area can be useful.



Partnership working

Our recommendation	Who needs to take ownership of this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear purpose of the PPG is explained from the outset and agreed by both the practice staff and the PPG members. This will vary from practice to practice. 	<p>Practices PPG members</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jointly develop the agenda items for meetings and consider short and long-term goals. 	<p>Practices PPG members</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to ensure that a member of clinical staff is available for PPG meetings. 	<p>Practices</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure meetings are held at accessible times and locations to encourage the existing members' attendance, but also explore other ways of encouraging feedback from the wider patient community. 	<p>Practices PPG members and Patients</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is key that members feel they have been listened to and their suggestions acted upon, or that explanations are provided as to why not. This could be best demonstrated by using a 'you said, we did' approach to reporting at each meeting on discussions from the previous meeting. 	<p>Practices</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No 'one size fits all', each group should decide what PPG structure or arrangement works best in their practice. 	<p>Practices PPG members and Patients</p>



Recruitment, promotion and communication

Our recommendation	Who needs to take ownership of this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise the value of using different methods of recruitment and promotion, for example via text messages, TV screens in reception; newsletters; and perhaps events. 	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give information to patients when they first join the practice to recruit members for the PPG. 	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be innovative with the engagement approach with patients from the PPGs, such as running coffee morning and activity groups. 	Practices PPG members and Patients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider offering PPG activities on-line to encourage contributions from broader groups of patients. 	Practices LNCCG Patients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make links with existing local community groups to promote the PPG's work and gather patients' feedback. 	Practices PPG members and Patients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the ethnicity of the practice population and whether or not there are significant proportions of this population who are non-English speaking. If so, then consider what support could be offered to engage non-English speaking patients. 	Practices



Recommendations

Support and resources

Our recommendation	Who needs to take ownership of this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Raise awareness of the existing support available in the city, including network meetings, designated CCG staff and training. Please also refer to Appendix 3 for a full list of what support is available to PPGs.	LNCCG
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offer guidance on how to get opinions from wider patients, for example how to do both qualitative and quantitative surveys with patients.	LNCCG
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offer a mechanism for PPGs to connect with one another and share information, ideas and best practice.	LNCCG
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide topical and relevant information to PPGs for them to consider including in their meeting agendas where felt to be appropriate.	LNCCG
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore the possibility of joint PPGs in some local areas.	LNCCG Practices



Next Steps

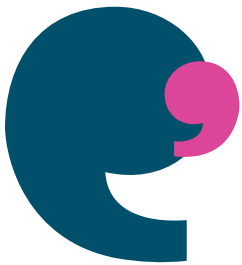
We will share this report with Leeds North CCG who commissioned this project.

As with all our publications, we will also upload the full report to the Healthwatch Leeds website.

Acknowledgements

This report has been written by Tatum Yip, Community Project Worker at Healthwatch Leeds, in collaboration with Chloe Rankin, Vice Chair and Anna Chippindale, Project Support Volunteer at Healthwatch Leeds.

Our thanks goes out to the CCGs; practice staff, PPG members and patients who responded to our questionnaires. Your views have helped to make the report possible.



Appendix 1

List of the practices who were selected by Leeds North CCG to take part in the project

- Meanwood Group Practice
- Collingham Church View Surgery
- St Martins Practice
- The Avenue Surgery
- Oakwood Lane Medical Practice
- Aireborough Family Practice
- Rutland Lodge Medical Practice
- Westfield Medical Centre
- The One Medical Group



Appendix 2

Patients' suggestions which they think a PPG could help the practice






- 11 patients suggested that the PPG could aid them with difficulties in making appointments; a lack of urgent appointments being a particularly frequent issue here.
- Five patients thought the PPG could play a useful role providing information and communicating with patients.
- Four suggested that the PPG could make changes to the waiting area, for instance, providing a children's play area and water dispenser.




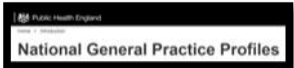

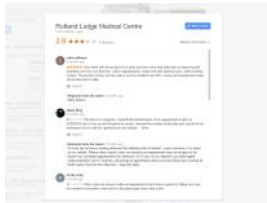

Appendix 3:
Resources and tools for PPGs

<p>Leeds patient champion programme https://www.leedswestccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/how/patient-champion/</p> <p>Support people to champion the voice of the wider public. Include access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peers support (meet and share with other PPG members from across the city) Training, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective PPGs Being an effective patient champion Social media Introducing the NHS Equality and diversity Tools and resources to help you ask the right questions Individual support Opportunities to attend local, national and international events 	
<p>CCG Engagement team</p> <p>Some CCG engagement teams can provide support and guidance to PPG. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting access to the patient champion programme Attending each PPG annually Helping to re-launch PPGs that are struggling Developing tools and resources to support PPGs Providing taster training sessions at your practice Providing opportunities for PPG members to network and share best practice Supporting links with the voluntary sector 	



<p>Leeds patient involvement toolkit for PPGs https://www.leedsnorthccg.nhs.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/PPDES-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf</p> <p>A toolkit for practice managers and PPG, including Top tips Resources and tools such as templates for ground rules and terms of reference Links to other sources of support</p>	
<p>Leeds CCG Community Network https://www.leedswestccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/how/join/</p> <p>Regular emails outline involvement and engagement opportunities Quarterly Engage magazine</p>	
<p>GP practice complaints and compliments Ask your GP practice manager to share (anonymised) complaints and compliments feedback. This can help you identity themes and trends and will influence your action plan</p>	
<p>National Association for Patient Participation http://www.napp.org.uk/</p> <p>Access to a wide range of tools and resources</p>	
<p>National GP Patient Survey Results https://gp-patient.co.uk/</p> <p>Just type in the name of your GP practice and see what other registered patients are saying about the practice. You can even compare your practice with other local practices. This can help you identity themes and trends and will influence your action plan</p>	



<p>Patient Opinion https://www.patientopinion.org.uk/</p> <p>An independent site about people experience of healthcare. This can help you identity themes and trends and will influence your action plan</p>	
<p>National General Practice Profiles https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/general-practice</p> <p>Information about people who live in your area. Helps PPGs to understand diversity and consider the needs of the wider community</p>	
<p>NHS Choices http://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx</p> <p>Shows feedback about your GP practice. This can help you identity themes and trends and will influence your action plan</p>	
<p>Google reviews</p> <p>Search for your GP practice on google and select 'reviews' from the panel on your right hand side. Shows feedback about your GP practice. This can help you identity themes and trends and will influence your action plan.</p>	
<p>NHS Leeds North Virtual PPG network</p> <p>The CCG recognises the importance of strong Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) as a means of engaging patient populations in the work of the NHS in Leeds. The CCG's revised Communications and Engagement strategy identified the establishment of a virtual network between PPGs as a possible means to support practices and patients in establishing and maintaining active and engaged PPGs. Work is currently ongoing (Dec 2016) with Leeds North PPGs and Practice managers to roll out and promote this network.</p>	



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