



PPG overview

Summary review of PPGs within Luton:
2021-2022 Q4

Introduction

With a population of around 213,052 people ([Local Health - Public Health England - Reports: get a dashboard on a custom area](#)), Luton is served by 26 GP practices. Along with the rest of the country, there have been changes with the local health care systems, initially with Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) and later Integrated Care Systems (ICS). As a result, there is an ICS joining Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) known as the BLMK ICS (<https://www.blmkpartnership.co.uk/>). The commissioning for GPs in Luton is carried out by a Commissioning Collaborative, for Bedfordshire and Luton, however, the GP practices in Luton are still commissioned by a local Place based team.

In recent years there has been an initiative, driven nationally, to create local Primary Care Networks (PCNs). Currently there are approximately 1250 PCNs in England, with each one supporting between 30,000 to 50,000 patients ([NHS England » Primary care networks](#)). In Luton, there are five PCNs: Eden, Hatter's Health, Medics, Oasis and Phoenix. In Luton, due to the pandemic, the PCNs are not as advanced as initially hoped in terms of their development.

For around seven years, each GP practice has within their contact an expectation to have a Patient Participation Group (PPG). The purpose of a PPG is to work collaboratively as the patients, with the service providers to ensure the patients registered at that practice receive the best and most efficient and effective care.

They're a great way for patients to provide feedback, ideas and views on the services their local practice provides, and to support the practice in giving patients the best possible service.

- BLMK ICS

Healthwatch Luton have in the past, been given feedback on the PPGs and how they are working from some of the local PPG participants. This is fed into our overall feedback system.



Methodology

Healthwatch Luton previously carried out reviews on all local GP websites in June 2020, and a review in November 2021. These were carried out in a non-invasive way and to establish what information was available in the public domain on their websites. During these reviews, there was discrepancy between different practices and what was available about their PPGs.

Healthwatch Luton contacted the Practice Managers of the individual GP practices to ask them questions about what they were doing for their PPGs during the pandemic, how this information was shared with the practice and what they were planning to do with their PPGs post pandemic.

This contact was made by email. PPGs were also asked if there was anything they had hoped Healthwatch Luton could share for them about their PPGs. A couple said they would contact Healthwatch Luton in the future if they had anything they wanted to be shared with the public or professionals.

Responses

Of the GP practices contacted, eight responded. Two of those who responded do have more than one site.

Responses were sent back via email and were collated in a table, which is summarised over the next page.



Overview of PPGs in Luton

Healthwatch Luton received responses from eight GP practices: Castle Medical Group, Conway Medical Centre, Lea Vale Medical Group, Woodland Avenue Practice, Neville Road Surgery, Kingsway Medical Centre, Bramingham Medical Centre and Pastures Way Surgery.

When asked if their PPG was active at present, 87% (7) said they were active in some form. One stated it 'had not had one for some time'. Two specifically mentioned they were holding remote/virtual meetings, two mentioned contact was by email or regular messaging with PPG members, and one mentioned updating members verbally.

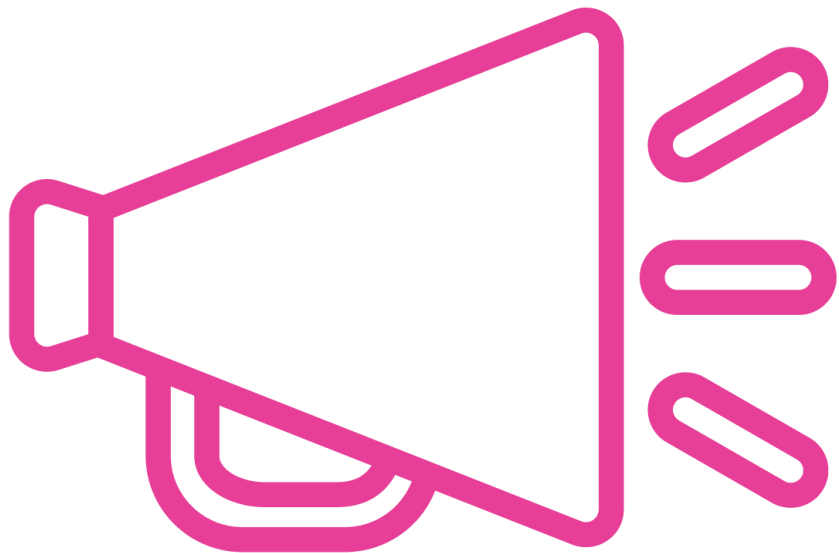
Regarding meetings, 63% (5) had met within the last quarter, with one having a meeting due in December, another due in January and one in February. One PPG stated they had not met since August and another 'not for at least six months'.

“We are trying to encourage patients to join but we are not having a very good uptake.”

GP practices were asked how individuals were able to find out about the PPG and becoming members of their PPGs. Two mentioned they have notices up in the surgery. One mentioned they have a system

when someone contacts them to leave feedback, whether that be through complaints, social media, email or another way, they let them know about the PPG and they also call people about it. One practice has a notice on their patient screen for patients to view to see about joining the PPG. One practice stated they relied on word of mouth to let people know the PPG existed and how to join.

When asked about how they share information about the PPGs, for example previous meeting minutes, there were only 4 (50%) responses. They stated that they were displayed on notice boards, websites and social media. One surgery does send out texts which are linked to the newsletter, which in turn is linked to the PPG information.



Recommendations

Based on the limited responses received from the Practice Managers, there are some recommendations that Healthwatch Luton would like all GP practices and PPGs in Luton to consider.

- **Information about PPGs is accessible**

Whilst most of the practices stated differing ways to share information about the PPG, it would be a recommendation of this report for all PPGs to have their information, including previous minutes and dates of upcoming meetings, on display in their waiting rooms, on their websites and sent out through social media.

- **Patient Participation Group membership**

Knowledge about PPGs and what they can achieve does not appear to be very well known. It would be a recommendation of this report for PPGs to have a drive to increase membership to their PPGs. This could be a campaign supported by local organisations, commissioners and local Healthwatch.

- **People Participation Group meetings**

As the pandemic and effects of coronavirus are ongoing, meetings can be difficult to have in person due to the risks to members. Equally, due to digital poverty and a lack of digital knowledge or access, remote meetings can be difficult. It would be a recommendation of this report for PPGs to continue a hybrid method for meetings and to allow members to join meetings in the most accessible manner for them.

- **People Participation Group support**

It would be a recommendation of this report that there is support for the PPGs to get established and understand their purpose within the surgery. This could be from other local PPGs, supporting organisations or the Clinical Commissioning Collaborative.

Data Information

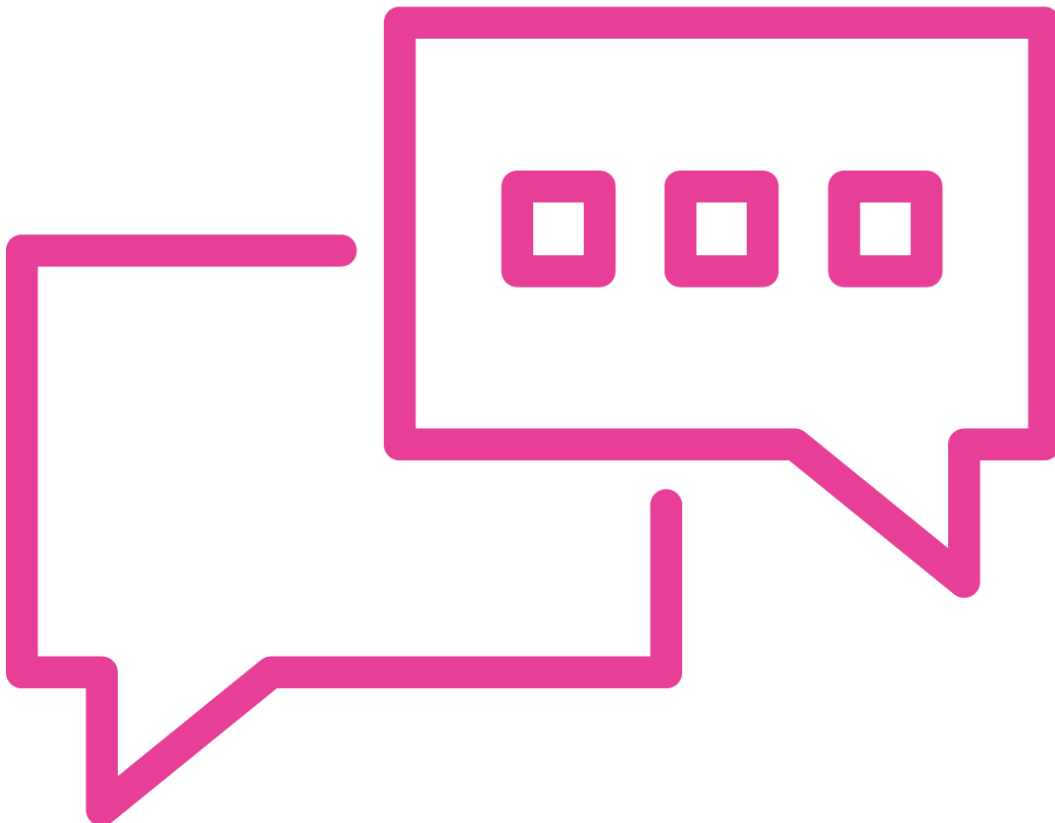
The data will remain the property of Healthwatch Luton and any use of it should be referenced.

Evaluation

Healthwatch Luton used this desk research as a way to understand what was happening with PPGs locally, and found the lack of interaction and response from the practices discouraging. There needs to be a stronger relationship between local Healthwatch and providers of services and this is something that Healthwatch Luton will endeavour to achieve.

Healthwatch Luton feel that this area of work was worthwhile and something that needed to be done to establish an understanding of how practices are engaging with their patients as we, as a country, begin to lead lives in a pandemic world.

Healthwatch Luton would like to support local surgeries to share information with the general public about their PPGs.



healthwatch Luton

Healthwatch Luton
Futures House, The Moakes
Luton
LU3 3QB

www.healthwatchluton.co.uk

t: 01582 817 060

e: info@healthwatchluton.co.uk

 [@hwluton](https://twitter.com/hwluton)

 facebook.com/healthwatch.luton