**Patient Forum Minutes**

**6th February 2018**

**Attendees:** Marion Vause, David Burton, Iris Connaughton, Edwina Russell, Rosemary Homes, Alan Prior, Alan Wright, Patricia Thomsett-Jones, Judith Hardy, Liz Johnston, Sheila Harris, Cynthia Rosser & John Surridge

Dr Revi Jassal– GP Partner

Mrs L Betts – Practice Manager

Mrs R Seaman – Assistant Practice Manager

**Apologies**: Hugh Axton, Steve Mahoney, Adam Murray, Mike Rose, Rosie Rechter, Valerie Bligh, Susan Falconer, Mr & Mrs Graham, Jenny King, Moyra Carey & Brenda Donald

1. **Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting**

Balmoral Surgery has now employed a Pharmacy Technician to assist the GPs. Odette Lattimer- Gittins started with us in December 2017 and works Monday – Friday until 1pm. Dr Jassal said that the new role is already saving the GPs a lot of time.

1. **Feedback from members of the Deal Health Patient Forum**

None, as they had not had a meeting since the last Balmoral Surgery Patient Forum.

1. **Outcome of this year’s patient survey and formulation of action plan.**

Becky gave all of the members of the group a copy of this year’s questionnaire results and explained that we would be asking the group to look at these during the meeting and try and come up with some ideas that could form an action plan. Becky explained that the survey response rate was lower than in previous years and that the greatest response came on days where we had a member of the Forum Group handing out the questionnaires in the waiting room. Becky thanked the members of the group that gave up their time to do this. Overall the results were not as good as in previous years. However, a lot of the questions focused around appointment access so this was to be expected given the current recruitment problems within the NHS. Lesley explained that as a Practice we have recruited a Paramedic Practitioner to help try and alleviate access problems. In this year’s questionnaire we referred to the difficulties in recruiting GPs and the current strains on resources in the NHS. We asked patients if they were aware of these issues and the alternative health professionals that patients could now see instead of GP. The results of the questionnaire showed that the majority of patients were not aware of the new health professionals being used, so Becky and Lesley feel that addressing this should be the main item on this year’s action plan.

Becky informed the group that the response to questions on online access were far more positive than in previous years with 27.9% of patients now using this service to book their appointments, compared with 10.66% in 2016. Some of the group expressed concerns that not everyone has a computer so not all can use this service. Lesley said that we do not expect online appointments to be the main way that patients book their appointments, but we are continually promoting this service so that those who want to use it can, and this may reduce demand on the phones in the morning.

1. **Group discussions to gain feedback on current Practice Issues**

At this meeting, the group broke into several smaller groups to look at the results of the recent survey and try to come up with some further ideas for this year’s action plan. In addition the groups were also asked for their feedback on a couple of other questions. The questions and the answers that the groups formed are listed below;

1. ***Could you please have a look at this year’s questionnaire results and suggest an idea for our Action Plan?***
2. Using texts for advising patients (surveys, paramedic etc.)
3. Social Media
4. More use of the TV
5. Texting information
6. Low background music for the upstairs waiting room
7. Threatening non-attendant patients with being struck off

All of the above suggestions were discussed and it was decided that the second part of this year’s action plan should focus on improved communication with patients. The group thought that increased use of the text messaging service would be a good way of doing this. Becky and Lesley said that they would look into this, but explained that there are new Data Protection Regulations coming in May 2018 and we will need to ensure that we can use this service for this purpose, as its original purpose was for appointment reminders. Becky and Lesley will look into this and feed back to the group at the next meeting. However if this is not possible, they will look at other options that the surgery can use to improve communication with patients. One of the potential options could involve Balmoral Surgery having a presence on social media, but this will need to be thoroughly researched to ensure that this is used for the correct purpose.

Lesley informed the group that unfortunately we have chosen to no longer play music in the waiting rooms. In order to play music in the waiting room, Practices have to have a licence and there is a cost for this which has increased drastically over the last few years. Also, when the Practice did play music we received complaints against music being played and dissatisfaction with the choice of radio station that we played. Subsequently we decided to no longer play music in the waiting area.

The group discussed threatening non-attendant patients will being struck off and Lesley explained that the Practice is becoming far more responsive to patients who do not attend, and a lot of clinicians in the Practice now ring patients to ask why they did not attend. Lesley explained that there are strict rules regarding removing patients from your list for not attending, so this is not that easy to do. Lesley added that since we introduced the functionality which enables patients to cancel their appointment through text message, this has reduced the number of unattended appointments.

1. ***As you know, due to the current GP Recruitment Crisis, Balmoral Surgery is now exploring new models of Care and has started employing health care professionals such as the Paramedic Practitioner. Could you please think about the best way that the Practice can communicate this change to patients?***
2. Text, Posters, Social Media and more use of TV
3. Enlighten patients regarding the patients the Paramedics would be seeing
4. Everywhere – online and in surgery
5. Leaflet promoting who the Paramedic Practitioner can see

As previous discussed, increasing awareness of alternative health professionals that are currently being used in GP Practices is to be the main focus of this year’s action plan. Subsequently Becky and Lesley asked the group what they felt was the best way to communicate this change.

The group discussed all of the suggestions that were made and it was decided that we would create a leaflet for patients explaining who the Paramedic Practitioner is, and what sort of problems they can deal with. We will also put this information on the TV screens, in the next Newsletter and on our Website to try and ensure that this information reaches as many patients as possible. Some of the group mentioned Social Media as a way to communicate this message, and whilst this may be something that we look into in the future, a lot of the group felt that as not everyone has a computer this is not the preferred option for delivering this message to patients.

1. ***Could you please think of two speakers that you would like us to invite to our Patient Forum Group in the future?***
2. Speaker on mindfulness
3. Speaker for male ailments (prostate cancer etc.)
4. Speaker on home support for people discharged from hospital
5. CEO of East Kent Hospital Trust
6. Jayne Dunebee (Mindfulness Practitioner )
7. Speaker from the Deal Hub
8. Speaker to talk about stroke
9. A Pharmacist
10. “CrossRoads” Speaker

Lesley and Becky were very grateful for the list of possible speakers that the group gave. They explained to the group that the surgery has connections with some of the list and therefore they may be more likely to attend, but we will try inviting as many as we can on list over the course of the next few meetings. Lesley suggested that it is probably sensible to invite someone from the Hub to the next meeting as this is new service that may affect a lot of Balmoral Surgery’s patients, so it would be useful to hear more about this service. We also have a strong connection with Lynn Vasey (Care Navigator for Deal), who will be able to talk about home support for people discharged from hospital, so will also see if she is able to attend the next meeting.

1. ***Could you please think of a question that you would like to ask Dr Jassal, Lesley or Becky?***
2. Is there any more information about the Hub?

Lesley told the group that there is no new information. The hub should still be running from the 1st April and they are currently recruiting staff to work at the Hub.

1. **Any Other Business**
2. **Deal Watch**

Becky spoke to the group about the increasing way that Social Media is being used to give feedback on the surgery. In particular there are regularly discussions regarding the Practice on Facebook. Becky explained that although we actively encourage feedback from patients, we do not feel that Facebook is a fair way for this feedback to be given as is it unregulated and often very personal feedback that can be seen by large numbers of patients. Becky asked the group their thoughts on this matter and if they had any suggestions about how to handle this issue. Unfortunately the group felt that there is no easy solution to this problem, and the use of Social Media is likely to increase rather than decrease. There were some discussions about the Practice having their own Facebook site which they can use to inform patients about upcoming closures, changes to the practice etc., but Lesley and Becky were concerned that this may create another communication channel with patients and we do not have the staffing levels to be able to manage this.

**Date of next meeting: 5th June at @6pm**