



Red House Surgery PPG Chairman's Report, 2024

I start this report by expressing my appreciation to the surgery staff, all of whom make us welcome and give us their support in what we are trying to achieve.

The PPG has been well served again by Elspeth as Secretary, Sarah as Deputy Chair, and Christine as Treasurer and I thank them for their help and dedication. On the question of finance our resources have depleted but we do have sufficient for our needs. During the 2nd Flu clinic this year we did have a sale of a variety of goods and a raffle, raising £99.

'PPG Awareness' is promoted by the National Association of PPGs. We ran ours from 27th to 29th June and there were many members involved in activities to support it. We did run a daily raffle and had displays and a sale of useful, attractive items outside the front of the surgery. Over the three days we raised £944 which was excellent. As so often, our members gave their full support to this venture for which I thank them.

As an aid to future such activities we purchased a card reader as so many people are no longer carrying cash but wish to make purchases using modern methods.

Again we have enjoyed a wide variety of guest speakers on a range of medically associated subjects, as arranged by Jan and Jane. My thanks to them both.

We have also again enjoyed a Garden Party in the lovely garden of John Neale – many thanks to John. The weather did its best to dampen our spirits but our stoicism and determination overcame it.

Covid is still lurking in the background with many patients suffering long-term after-effects like fatigue, aches and pains. Vaccinations had ceased but the Spring course of vaccinations has started again with lots of mature people taking sensible advantage.

It is sad to report that there has been no progress on the subject of new surgery premises and the staff are disappointed as the current building limits the services they can provide. The PPG did write to David Bracey who is leading the Bletchley Pathfinder Project aimed at enhancing and redeveloping Bletchley Town Centre. The purpose of the letter was to draw his attention to Red House Surgery's desire to have larger premises and be able to offer a wider range of medical services for the people of Bletchley,

Patient demand has increased since Covid and now more patients are being dealt with via telephone consultations. This may seem to be a retrograde step but it does allow one doctor to deal with more patients per hour than via face-to-face consultations. Many patients find this more convenient than visiting the surgery and less intrusive to their day. There is also the benefit of having the doctor call the

patient instead of requiring the patient to wait for contact having been told that they were xxx in the queue. However, there should be no doubting the desire of many patients to see a doctor for a face-to-face consultation, some preferring specific doctors.

On the subject of contacts the surgery has, in February, introduced a new telephone system which it is hoped will improve the flow of telephone calls and remove some patient stress waiting to be answered. I hope that it can overcome the main patient criticism of the surgery.

The Corkill Award was established by the N.A.P.P. Board in 2012 in recognition of a former Chairman, Joe Corkill, and his contribution to the promotion of patient participation for over twenty years. This year the theme was 'Celebrating PPGs Working in their Wider Communities' with a prize of £400 awarded. The winning PPG receives a prize of £400. Denton Surgery Patient Group from Northampton won it after reporting their weekly Dementia Activity Sessions and their Podcasts giving news and updates. We were keen to enter and our excellent, thoroughly researched PPG submission was prepared by Shona and my thanks to her.

Shona has also produced our excellent PPG Newsletters which include many interesting articles and health tips. Again, I sincerely thank Shona for her work on these publications.

The Crown Singing Group is going well and now with a new leader, funding for the future has been obtained by Jane with the proviso that it is opened up to other surgeries in the Bletchley area. Interestingly, research in Australia involving brain scans shows several positive activations with beneficial effects for mental health and wellbeing during singing. Singing is one of the pleasures of life and if you'd like to join us you will be very welcome.

The PPG does record some details of its members so we are governed by the Data Protection regulations. We do have a policy and it is currently being reviewed and will be updated as required.

To conclude I have been the chairman of this PPG since 2017 and feel that it is time to withdraw and allow fresh eyes to look to the future and fresh minds to address the challenges we face in support of the Red House Surgery and its family of patients.

I have genuine fears for the NHS with:-

- Doctors and Nurses striking;

- Nearly 10 million patients waiting for planned treatment;

- The genuine concerns of surgeries about funding allocations, plus a variety of other issues with the 2024/25 contract between the NHS and frontline surgeries like Red House.

In a recent podcast Dr. Katie Bramall-Stainer, Chair of the BMA's GP's Committee spelled out some interesting views about the current problems for GP surgeries, pointing out the possibility that industrial action by GPs could occur before the end of this year if the contract conditions do not change in accordance with her and the committee's recommendations. The future is worrying for both surgeries and patients with a shortage now of 2000 Frontline Doctors and the dispute between the government and surgeries about the funding gap, (1.9% offered when 8.7% thought to be required).

Against that somewhat worrying background there is a lot of good news. There are many exciting discoveries about existing drugs and treatments that are effective against problems they were not designed for. There are reports of innovation in the treatment of neurological conditions and of personalised injections proving to be effective in suppressing some cancers. Nearly every day newspapers have reports of new treatments or new equipment that have potentially exciting futures and solutions are being found and introduced more quickly than in the past.

So no, I'm not jumping from a sinking ship. I will give my full support to the new chairperson but I'm 79 years old this year and there should be a younger person at the helm in these troubled times.

One last but important thought. Jane Hanlon, the Surgery Manager was a prime mover for the creation of the PPG in 2009 and has been a strong supporter throughout. She is generous with her time, her knowledge, her experience and her many brilliant ideas/suggestions. I am extremely grateful to her for her support, so a very big thank you, Jane.

Stephen Bates, PPG Chairman
May, 2024.