

Laurel Bank Surgery PPG – message from the Chair

My name is David Williams and I am the current Chair of the newly formed Laurel Bank Surgery Patient Participation Group (PPG). Following the recent merger of Practices, we have also merged our PPGs and have been meeting as a single group since the beginning of the year. The purpose of this message is to make you aware of the PPG and, if interested, encourage your involvement. The only requirement is that you are a patient of Laurel Bank Surgery.

What is the PPG?

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of Laurel Bank Surgery patients who volunteer their time to support the practice to make a positive difference for patients and staff and help improve local healthcare. The intent is that staff and patients to work together to share ideas which help improve the services offered at the practice. We have varied backgrounds including healthcare, industry and banking.

The group works with practice staff to share patient perspectives, strengthen communication, and contribute to service development.

Why have a PPG?

One answer is that the NHS requires all GP practices in England to have a PPG as part of their contract with the NHS; happily, in our case the Practice wants a PPG. In NHS jargon, which I've found a lot of, we are 'the patient voice'. As well as providing a communication channel, we can, and do, offer a quite different perspective from staff operating inside the NHS/Practice bubble.

We are a channel for helping patients, their families, and carers be heard. Your views are important and will be listened to. It may not be possible to act on every suggestion, but all feedback is valuable and will be taken into consideration. Working in a spirit of mutual respect, openness and trust, all patients' views will be discussed and, where appropriate, we will work together on solutions.

How we work

The PPG meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month to discuss ideas, share feedback, and support improvements at the practice. We hold our meetings on a rota to suit different diaries, some in the afternoon, others in the evening.

The Practice is represented at each meeting and a GP joins us quarterly. We also alternate between in-person sessions and online meetings on Microsoft Teams, so you can join in whichever way suits you best. We are volunteers, there's no expectation that you attend every meeting.

Minutes are shared with the wider patient community via noticeboards in each location. The group is chaired by a patient member

Our priorities and challenges

I see our main focus on enhanced communication - helping with the tone and language of patient bulletins, website content, newsletters. It's also increasingly obvious that we face a digital future and supporting those who need help with online access is a priority. The Practice is working to align its work processes to achieve the same patient experience irrespective of location attended – I believe we can support this by observation and feedback.

If you have been to the surgery as a patient, parent, carer or friend then your experiences matter and we'd welcome your involvement. Finally, a challenge, we are overwhelmingly retirees and would love to welcome younger members from groups such as students and young parents – it's an interesting way to better understand Primary care.

