**Notes from the PPG meeting held on 3rd March 2025,**

**Lenham Community Centre, Appleton Room at 1pm.**

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Present: Terry New (chair), Carol McKeough (note taker), Julia Allen, Maggie Lineham, Stephen Taylor, Peter Livesey, Sadie Curtis, Elaine Moles, Dr Lloyd, Pam Barber, Nicola Segrue (new reception manager), Jan Evever.

No apologies have been received but Peter advised that Neil Pedlingham had passed away at Christmas. Neil will be missed as he was always supportive of the practice when help was needed. Rest In Peace and thank you Neil.

1. **Notes from PPG meeting on 2nd December 2024**

The notes from the meeting on 2nd September were approved and signed and have been pinned to the Notice Board in the Lenham Surgery Lobby.

1. **Practice Up-date**

There have been interviews for reception manager as Olivia has decided to return to hair dressing. Nicola Segrue has been appointed. Pam Barber (operations manager) is leaving in Mid-March to work nearer to her home in Medway and Georgia Lane has been offered the post. Interviews for new reception staff, paramedic and phlebotomist have also been completed. A new GP has been appointed Dr D Costa and Dr Taylor is further reducing his hours. There will be a new booking in machine which will be compatible with the latest upgrade of Microsoft.

Elaine reported that the Spring Covid booster vaccinations will be available from the practice for eligible patients who will receive an SMS message to book. Or patients can book via the NHS national booking system.

The uptake of the flu vaccination has been very good during autumn and winter this may well have been boosted by the need for eligible patients to have the RSV vaccination. Patients should be **encouraged** to cancel appointments early if they have received an appointment reminder but can’t attend a booked appointment. Then the appointment can be offered to another patient.

**Did Not Attend data: December 24 – 122, January 25 – 102, February 25 - 91**

**Harrietsham** surgery is now fully open with GP’s attending all sessions. It is important to note that should the GP be late for any reason the reception staff cannot dispense medication until the GP is present. Reception staff can open the front door if there are other staff on the premises. Plans for the new porch and front door at Harrietsham have been agreed. We look forward to seeing the work being carried out.

A discussion was held about the much-needed development of the Lenham Surgery. The issue is with the District Valuer currently. There are also some concerns about car parking as the plans for the extension to the surgery will use much of the current staff car park. Julia Allen (deputy chair of the Community Hall committee) reported that the plans for the increase to the current Community Hall car park have stalled and it is possible that some legal action will be taken.

Elaine mentioned that reception staff are still receiving verbal aggression from patients. Earlier this morning a nurse was berated by a patient who she was seeing. Delays occurred because of staff sickness so the nurse was doing her best to see the patients from 2 lists. The patient was requested to leave and will receive a letter about behaviour from the practice. PPG felt very strongly that staff should not be subjected to abuse. It is very sad that patients feel entitled to be rude and abusive to staff members.

On the practice’s website there are forms that can be used to communicate with the practice without having to use the phone. The email address for the practice is *gp.g82093@nhs.net*

**PPG Issues**

We discussed the “New Deal for GP’s” contract reforms which aim at fixing the front door of the NHS and see the return of the family doctor. Dr Lloyd did say that the finer details of discussions between the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the BMA about how this will be achieved will inform how this works in practice. Ongoing concerns were expressed about the difficulty patients experience in getting to see a GP or a more appropriate practitioner. Getting through by phone continues to be a challenge and there are concerns that some patients who are ill give up trying. The 6 opportunities to seek an appointment via the limited on-line process works well for patients but can be a challenge to manage with such high demand for appointments via the phone and in person. The reception staff all need to be fully trained to be Care-navigators so that they can ensure that patients are supported to see the most appropriate medical practitioner, be it GP, nurse, physiotherapist or pharmacist. This care navigating role increases the time reception staff take to deal with each patient, so queues on the phone and in person take longer but should result in the patient being directed to the most appropriate medical practitioner or to the social prescriber.

This led to a discussion on the statement from DHSC “*The new contract will modernise general practice by requiring GP surgeries to allow patients to request appointments online during working hours from October, freeing up phones for those who need them most, and making it easier for practices to triage patients based on medical need”*. Apparently AccurX will not be funded ongoing for the triage process as is currently the case for Bearsted and Sutton Valance surgeries, so a new provider will be needed. Although there is an excellent case for the online triage system that does appear to be work across the country and for Bearsted and Sutton Valance, there is still concerns that this may be a challenge too far for LVP.

PPG members do feel strongly that the LVP front door needs fixing as too many patients are not getting through to see the most appropriate medical practitioner. 111 is there 24-7 and points patients to the most appropriate service if they cannot get an appointment at the practice or at any of the other practices extra hours services or at the Vine on Saturdays.

Carol asked if the practice is using any ambient AI during the triage process. Currently not directly with any patient focussed situation but it’s been tested with minute taking for internal meetings. Dr Lloyd said it was not as good as the normal process. Elaine agreed to inform the PPG if patient contacts with the practices are informed by AI.

1. **PCN**

The next PCN meeting is on 10th March. If the PCN notes are agreed at the meeting Carol will circulate.

The social prescriber Danii continues to be very busy as all surgeries make referrals to her. She has been in post over a year, and it seems evident that additional capacity will be required to maximise the role and to reduce pressure on GP’s if the worried well can engage in activities like craft sessions and singing and walking for health.

Integrated Neighbourhood teams are developing, The Ridge Frailty team are working with care homes to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. They accept referrals from professionals (GP’s, Nurses and Social Workers) for patients in the community where interventions may help to improve quality of life and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

1. **ICB & HCP updates**

Carol continues to attend the PPG chairs meeting and will circulate any minutes or PowerPoints that are relevant/ interesting to the PPG. A great deal of the discussions /presentations revolve around communication systems that may or may not be working. One of the biggest concerns expressed during the chairs meetings are the interoperability of computer systems. We were told that the NHS AP would be a hub for all NHS communications, but this does not seem to be the case now. The ‘patient knows best’ information from some hospitals feeds into the NHS Hub but Guy’s and St Thomas’s ‘My Chart’ does not. There are also serious concerns with what information a medical practitioner outside of the GP practices can see when dealing with a patient in A&E, at Urgent Treatment centre or during an accident. The HCP and ICB seem to have found it difficult to provide us with the information about systems, we have been promised that we will have a presentation at the next Chairs meeting on 20th March. (I won’t hole my breathe)

1. **Update for Len Valley Health Walks** (by Jan Enever)

Jan was very pleased to report that she made a successful grant bid from the Lenham Parish Council, to provide Hi Viz jackets for Walk leaders and to pay for health walks leaflets for distribution to patients and especially for Doctors and Nurses to signpost patients to the Health Walks. Jan wishes to express her thanks to The parish council for their support. She showed a sample hi viz vest and a copy of the new leaflet. The leaflets will be available in the waiting room but copies will be laminated and put on the Healthy walks part of the screens in the waiting room and on the PPG notice board in the Surgery lobby. A copy will need to be posted in the Harrietsham Surgery.

Walks have continued through January and February, and some have had challenges with rain and mud. There are 2 walks on a Thursdays of different lengths and a walk on Saturday. A short walk around Lenham village is taking place on Wednesdays at 2.30 due to demand for those who are wanting to walk but have challenges.

There is a practice meeting next week and Elaine will ensure that all practice staff are well informed about the walks available and to encourage patients to contact Jan to discuss the most appropriate walk for them.

1. **Communication**
* Dr Lloyd is running the London Marathon in aide of Pancreatic Cancer. Several PPG members have handed him sponsorship money.
* The new check-in machine will be installed in the next few weeks. This is very much needed to avoid lengthening queues to check in with reception staff who are also dealing with other patients.
* We discussed the importance of the practice providing information to patients via Facebook as well as in the 2 local magazines Lenham Focus with Editor, David Jackson and Harrietsham’s Network with Editor, Nicola File. This information needs to come from the practice even if Terry negotiates with the editors about space. The better we can inform patients about problems/challenges the better. **Import to remind patients that the practice is not an emergency service.**
* We discussed the negative comments about LVP on social media and agreed that responding to these has led to personal insults and threats on some occasions. Most are about getting an appointment. Better to inform patients about issues and challenges to counteract the social media complaints rather than entering a written social media stream. The digital front door has helped Bearsted and SV deal with most of the appointment issues/complaints.
* The ability to book a non-urgent appointments online is still not available. The point was made that many patients do not need to see a GP or other practitioner **Urgently** on the day but the delay in getting a non-urgent appointment to consult a GP seems to be very long in some instances 4 to 6 weeks was mentioned.
* **Email address for PPG** **ppglenham@gmail.com**

**Next meeting: 2nd June 2025 1.00 pm Lenham Community Centred, Appleton room.**