

PPG – MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 4TH JULY 2024

WAPPING GROUP PRACTICE

ATTENDEES

Dr M Farrelly – Senior Partner
Nayib Ahmed – Practice Manager
Stela Danaj – For the Reception

Vernon Morgan – Chairman
Daniel Kruyer
Kit Chan
Beverly Saunders
Mike Nulty
Sally Unwin – Secretary

APOLOGIES

Hugh Maloney
Shai Davies
Deborah Savage
Mike Smith
Angela Abeysinghe
Anne Palmer
Jerome Cotter
Caroline Crowley

The Chairman noted that a quorum of attendees had not been achieved.

It was with regret that the meeting had to be abandoned because of the need for a minimum representation of patients. It was noted that the date of the summer PPG scheduled as it was for the 4th July, 2024, was strongly competing with the UK General Election; the commencement of championship tennis at Wimbledon, and the football Euros in Germany!

As absenteeism has been noted over several years, the Chair suggested that he will in future avoid scheduling meetings in July and August, when members have personal commitments or are holidaying abroad.

The next meeting will now be held as previously scheduled on **Thursday 5th September** at 6:15pm. The following meeting is on **Thursday 7th November** at 6:15pm. Kindly note these dates for your diaries please.

The Chairman had several agenda points for discussion that he considered topical and from which patients might benefit. Many of these events will be out of date by our next meeting in September. Some of the key points are published herewith for members to consider.

NHS Ransomware Attack.

In late May or early June 2024, there was a cyber-attack on the Laboratory Information Management System of a company called Synnovis. This is a third-party system used by the NHS and hospitals delivering pathology and diagnostic testing. The company holds a database of patient's clinical records including laboratory results. It is this data that has been stolen in a cyber-attack. Synnovis is a partnership between SYNLAB UK & Ireland, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, and King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. The organisation has acknowledged an external attack on their system and reported it as a cyber-crime involving criminal ransomware. The company continues to investigate the depth of the breach in their security, and the precise nature of the information stolen. To my knowledge, no payment has been made to those seeking a ransom, but equally no undertaking has been given by the NHS

that patients records have not been published for sale on the Dark Web. Payroll data, banking details, and personal data of staff working at the organisation, are also compromised.

It remains unclear if GP's have been given any information as guidance for patients. Some senior NHS consultants fearful of the impact of these type of leaks have been critical of the company's decision to remain silent. The hack and theft of these medical records may impact as many as 4 million patients. Journalists reported that it was the company's intention to notify patients whose data has been compromised. As the breach occurred almost 6 weeks ago, it is unacceptable that patients are not being updated.

Moving forward, the chairman advised patients to be vigilant in reviewing all unexpected email or unsolicited telephone contact. In addition to be aware that the NHS will never ask patients to disclose their bank account details in any form of electronic communication.

He added that whilst Synnovis have not offered any specific instruction, some generic guidance has been published for individuals and families by the National Cyber Security Centre, and it is certainly worth ensuring your computer operating systems are updated with the company's latest operating systems to maximise internet security, on both android and Apple systems.

Full details here:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/data-breaches>

www.cyberaware.gov.uk

Access to GP Appointments.

According to NHS sources, GP Appointments for May were up by 20% nationally, at 30.5 million compared with 25 million appointments in May 2019. Although the figures indicate a considerable rise in the number of appointments, it is a complex area of analysis. Specifically, because accessing appointments is now possible across a range of methodologies. Almost all patients contact now begins with some form of initial telephone assessment. Whether this is a booking via the NHS App, through the practice website, via Econsult, via video-calling, or as a traditional face-to-face contact booked with an agent over the telephone. We have reported previously, that with the changes in healthcare provision post-pandemic, appointments may not necessarily be hosted with a GP. Patient requests will be triaged by experienced Practice Assistants and allocated to one of number of medical service providers within the practice, or within the wider Network, according to the nature of the enquiry. Appointments covered by other healthcare professionals widens availability and liberates GPs to other patient's requiring their attention and expertise. An increase in availability of appointments, may also be indicative of the record numbers recorded by NHS England.

Thanks to the [primary care recovery plan](#), the NHS is now offering more than 1.4 million GP appointments every working day.

A combination of patient dissatisfaction and political intervention, has seen a new directive issued by NHS England, requiring every GP practice to offer face to face appointments, as well as telephone and online consultations. Many patients are increasingly choosing remote appointments where it is clinically appropriate and more convenient for them. Fundamental changes in the way patients access appointments have been met positively by patients, as many now realise that they do not have to physically journey to their surgery for routine medical

enquiries. With the increase in the provision of services provided by local pharmacists' access to community medicine has never been simpler. Unlike many practices across the country patients at Wapping Group Practice are very fortunate, with relatively good access to GP appointments. Appointments are usually available within a few days or in the same week, (subject to not requiring a double appointment with a named GP.) Booking is now available in advance within the NHS App, with diary bookings selectable by patients up to 16 weeks ahead at any one time. Patients can select the date, time and GP preferences, giving greater flexibility and offering the patient control over the entire booking process. For some patients who may be digitally excluded, (and for some who do not yet have the NHS App) the practice has run Digital Doctor Awareness classes locally. Appointments also remain accessible to any patient by telephoning the surgery in the normal way.

Ongoing NHS Industrial Action.

NHS faces fresh strike disruption over the summer months.

The NHS faced major disruption in July as junior doctors launched five days of industrial action, with services already under major pressure. There is no doubt that this latest strike was timed as politically motivated to coincide with the election and to maximise the plight of doctors and healthcare workers represented by the BMA. Wes Streeting as Labour Health Minister has already made bold claims that the NHS is "broken" and asked the BMA not to continue with strike action. The past 20 months of industrial action has at times seen 25,000 doctors off work across the NHS network. Industrial action is unsustainable in terms of trying to reduce patient's waiting times or improve patient's care.

The latest strike action ran from 7am on Thursday (27 June) until 7am on Tuesday 2 July, affecting all routine care and elective surgery. The NHS prioritises urgent and emergency care, with consultants stepping in to cover for junior doctors, who make up 50% of the medical workforce.

Since strikes began in late 2022, more than 1.4 million inpatient and outpatient appointments have had to be rescheduled. During the most recent action in February, 91,048 inpatient and outpatient appointments were rescheduled, and 23,760 staff were absent from work at the peak of the strikes. The pressure on hospitals due to industrial action saw 2.4 million patients visit A&E departments – the busiest month on record – which followed the busiest ever April for diagnostic activity, with over 2.3 million tests, checks and scans carried out.

Although extensive planning and cover arrangements were in place, the strikes caused widespread disruption to routine care and difficulties with discharging patients. Likewise, the number of patients that now require rescheduled procedures and the administration in cancelling, and rebooking does nothing for confidence in the system. Many patients have had their care interrupted and rescheduled multiple times, due to staff shortages and general malaise across the sector.

The NHS is reminding people that they should continue to use services as they normally would when they need urgent medical help – using 999 and A&E in life-threatening emergencies only. Patients should continue to attend planned appointments unless they have been contacted to say they have been postponed.

NHS CERVICAL SCREENING

Millions of women are being urged to come forward for cervical screening as new figures published on 1st May show a third of eligible under 50s do not take up the potentially lifesaving offer. Nationally, screening invitations are sent out by post, every 3 years for women aged 25-49 and every five years for women aged 50-64.

A new online resource will help GP's support the programme to be effective in achieving its aim to reduce the number of women who develop invasive cervical cancer. With this information the NHS is then able to target and organise education programmes to reduce the number of women who develop invasive cervical cancer and ultimately reduce the number of people who die from it.

The [latest figures](#) show that as of December last year, only 65 % of the 11 million eligible women aged 25-49 took up their cervical screening invitation. and were screened within the recommended time, In real terms 35 in every 100 patients invited for screening are still not taking up the offer. The proportion improves with 74.1% among women aged 50-64. But in real terms 25% are still not being screened. And more importantly, if they miss one invitation they are likely not to respond to further ones when sent. The NHS is keen for those who have not been screened, that they come forward and seek an appointment without having to wait a further 3 or 5 years.

The chairman is pleased to report that, at Wapping Practice, clinicians are working very hard to encourage women to come for their cervical screening by sending multiple invitations and booking patients opportunistically. This has resulted in QOF targets being achieved.

NHS cervical screening helps to prevent cervical cancer by using a highly effective test to check for high-risk HPV, which causes 99% of cervical cancers. HPV can cause abnormal cells to develop in the cervix and if left untreated, these cells can turn into cervical cancer over time.

The HPV vaccine protects against cervical cancer and a range of mouth and throat cancers and is given to both girls and boys in secondary school to protect them against catching the HPV infection and developing into pre-cancerous and cancer cells.

Whilst the NHS is aware of certain cultural and religious resistance to vaccination,

It is still important to attend cervical screening appointments if you have been vaccinated against HPV as the vaccine does not provide protection from all types of HPV, so there is a still a small chance of getting cervical cancer.

More information on NHS cervical screening and how to book an appointment is available at www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening.

Citizen's Advice Update.

Wapping Group Practice is currently promoting an important new service that replaces the former Citizens Advice service that has ceased. The new facility replaces the CAB and is known as the Social Welfare Service and operates from the surgery on Monday's. Appointments must be booked in advance with our reception staff.

The service offers free, impartial, independent advice, on a range of topics, providing help for individuals and families in need. This includes consumer rights advice, assistance with legal and family law issues, rental Agreements, Housing Associations, Universal Credit advice, and welfare administration. Dept of Work & Pensions and help with Disability Benefits applications. Debt advice, pension guidance and general money matters, including credit management and voluntary insolvency. Supporting court witnesses can be arranged. Assistance with worries over a family member with guidance on dependency, gambling addiction, or drugs. Directions on specialist mental health groups, including counselling services, referrals to specialist community groups, volunteering. For those patients who are lonely or have suffered bereavement, creating pathways to meeting new friends. Sign-posting for patients who feel digitally excluded, or who require guidance on technology and computer literacy. The organisation is there to advise on any number of complex concerns and worries faced by our patients. Particularly trying to minimise stress and anxiety with the ongoing Cost of Living Crisis, and patients navigating debt from Energy price rises.

The service is available as in person- face to face consultations, web chats over the internet or contact over a standard telephone service.

Wapping Group Practice website.

All patients are encouraged to regularly visit the practice's new website as a valuable resource for healthcare knowledge and a platform to access and manage services, appointments and much more.

A bulletin board of news and important messages is designed to keep patients up to date with NHS events and information.

With changes in access to appointments this is just one of the many ways in which patients may choose to access their community healthcare. <https://www.wappinggrouppractice.nhs.uk>

An increase in Type 2 Diabetes.

Gp's have identified over half a million more people at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. This equates to 20% of patients in every surgery catchment area deemed at risk. This is a considerable increase on the figures from screening undertaken in 2022, which were already considered to be rising exponentially.

What is causing the rates to rise?

Is it the simple fact that screening is more intense and as a result, data and numbers of patients tested are rising and therefore the subject is under greater scrutiny? Part of the answer to that question must be affirmative, but with that analysis comes the fact that a general awareness of food quality and the composition of our food, as well as lifestyle choices has a major impact on the development of this condition. In those areas of the country with high levels of poverty and large numbers of ethnic or non- British nationals, the volumes of those suffering the condition are greatest. The two are not and should not be naturally assimilated but with this condition Muslim and South Asian communities are genetically pre-disposed to developing type 2 diabetes.

As well as the human cost, treatment for Type 2 Diabetes accounts for around 10% of the annual NHS budget. Almost £17 billion per year is being spent on a condition that according to medical experts can be largely prevented by lifestyle changes.

In an effort to manage the condition effectively, the NHS has rolled out a range of innovative services with a new campaign : *Healthier You - NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme*.
(NHSDPP)

In 2023, The latest National Diabetes Audit shows that 3.6 million patients registered with a GP were found to have non-diabetic hyperglycaemia – also known as pre-diabetes -, compared with 3 million in 2022 – an increase of almost a 20%. In people under the age of 40, the figure rises to 25%. An earlier diagnosis and support to prevent progression of the condition assists both patients and the NHS in reducing costs. Treating patients early before the condition has become severe has better outcomes for the patient, is less costly and is less complex to treat. The condition is typically picked up when someone has a requisite blood test at their GP surgery.

Over 1.6 million people have been offered support through the Prevention Programme, which provides personalised support over nine-months with practical tools and advice on healthy eating and lifestyle, increasing physical activity and weight management.

Developing type 2 diabetes can have a devastating impact on people and their families – it is a leading cause of preventable sight loss in people of working age and is a major contributor to kidney failure, lower limb amputation, heart attack, stroke and some forms of cancer.

There is no doubt that thousands of people in England living with early onset type 2 diabetes are benefiting from more intensive and targeted care, but maintaining weight loss and physical fitness in patients with complex needs is challenging. NHS experts are now recognising that there are many factors that impact upon the condition. Including mental health awareness, educational needs, access to employment, welfare and nutritional education, and stigma associated with the condition. Importantly, whether the individual is able to overcome the social pressures that have caused the condition to develop.

Type 2 diabetes in people under 40 is a growing problem globally – England is no exception, meaning there is an ever-increasing challenge for the NHS –

The Prevention Programme is now available nationally to benefit people living with type 2 diabetes across the whole of England, doubling its capacity in this current year. The challenges of treating patients with this condition are recognised as complex. This is before we analyse what is in our food and what truly constitutes as a healthy diet.

The wider implications of social, geographic and economic factors impacting upon the health of a nation, have doubtless improved across the generations. The NHS defines Type 2 diabetes as a preventable condition. Maintaining that prevention is for some patients, a complex spiral of social and intellectual management that is simply unachievable.

Poverty is not a lifestyle choice, but it controls a persons' ability to access a healthy diet.

Personalised Cancer Vaccine Trials.

The NHS Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad (CVLP) is a platform that will speed up access to messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) personalised cancer vaccine clinical trials for people who have been diagnosed with cancer. It will also accelerate the development of cancer vaccines as a form of cancer treatment.

Through the CVLP, people with cancer who are receiving treatment in the NHS in England can be assessed to see if they might be eligible to join a cancer vaccine clinical trial, and then be referred to a hospital that is running a trial.

This collaboration, initially with pharmaceutical company BioNTech, is a significant step towards realising the potential of these personalised vaccines in cancer treatment, in the hope of transforming patient outcomes in the future.

Over time, the CVLP will enable patients to access multiple trials running in different NHS trusts in other parts of the country, increasing access in an equitable way.

It is set up by NHS England and Genomics England and works in parallel with the existing NHS Genomic Medicine Service.

What are personalised cancer vaccines?

Personalised mRNA cancer vaccines are a form of immunotherapy treatment, which are currently being tested in clinical trials. They are tailored to each person's cancer and work by training the immune system to recognise, destroy and prevent the spread of cancer cells.

The reason they are called vaccines is because they teach the immune system to fight cancer, in the same way that vaccines teach the immune system to protect itself from viruses and bacteria.

These personalised cancer vaccines are not designed to prevent cancer from developing in the first place. For these people, cancer vaccines may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back in the future. Not everybody who has been diagnosed or is having treatment for cancer will be eligible for a trial.

For patients who have given their consent to join the CVLP, the platform uses existing NHS patient data, as well as surplus tissue and a blood sample, to rapidly identify those eligible for trials – acting as a patient-to-trial matchmaking service.

Clinical teams will then discuss trial opportunities with potential participants and those who want to take part will be referred to their nearest NHS trial site.

The CVLP is being scaled up gradually, with several NHS Trusts set to come on board over the coming months. It is expected that vaccines will be trialled for different types of cancers as the evidence is gathered, and trials become available.

You can find out more about CVLP on the Southampton University website :

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/2024/05/cancer-vaccine-programme.page> and joining clinical trials in general at: [nhs.uk website](https://www.nhs.uk).

Community News

Fortunately, Wapping does not suffer the levels of anti-social behaviour that some areas of the capital do, but The Ward Panel maintain the importance of reporting any criminal activity observed by residents. It is crucial for the police and their neighbourhood teams to investigate crimes and to be effective. Thankfully, there has been a noticeable reduction in the cars driving through Wapping at high speed. There are still isolated cases using Wapping as a drive-through racing circuit, but the Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been active in reducing this activity. Likewise, the reduction in the consumption of nitrous oxide, and the associated piles of discarded cannisters on our neighbourhood streets, has improved.

The installation of new traffic calming measures in Wapping Lane has raised issues for St Peter's Catholic Church with vehicles mounting the pavement opposite the surgery in order to overtake buses. The surgery was not consulted regarding the traffic calming measure, and we are supporting St Peter's in their understandable concern for pedestrians exiting the church lobby area. There are no protective bollards or balustrades on that side of the road. The PPG is urgently working with the Ward Panel and St Peter's to investigate a review of this as a traffic safety concern.

Following the Wash Womble's recent civic award and the excellent work they undertake clearing litter in the locality, we understand there are plans for an expansion of the scheme into the Shadwell area and they hope to recruit a team in the geographic western corner of Wapping.

Please note that on Saturday 27th & Sunday 28th July Wapping will be closed for the T100 Triathlon event from 04:30 am on Saturday until 14:00 hrs on Sunday. There will be a very limited exit for vehicles. Exit points will be stewarded on Dock Street, Vaughan Way and Glamis Rd. For those of us who rely on their vehicles for transport, I would suggest parking north of the Highway if you need to use your vehicle early on that weekend.

Tower Hamlets Cost of Living Assistance

Following on from the Community Cupboard project which provided a lifeline to many in the borough, Tower Hamlets has introduced assistance for those families struggling to make Community Charge payments. Funding is available from a national Cost of Living Relief Fund. Tower Hamlets can provide financial assistance for families with joint incomes of less than £49,500.00.

***PLEASE NOTE**

Proof of income is necessary. Demand is also high and as a result applications are taking time to process. Since publishing this notification on the Agenda, the Chairman has since been informed that there are other limiting criteria for applications. Applicants must declare any joint or family savings totalling over £4,000.00 and the declaration of these savings makes the application invalid. Likewise, if the family are in receipt of any existing discounts on the Community Charge levied, the application will not be eligible to proceed.

https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/advice_and_benefits/cost-of-living/Council-Tax-Cost-of-Living-Relief-Fund.aspx