

BARING ROAD MEDICAL CENTRE PATIENTS' GROUP

Meeting: 25 October 2018
Baring Road Medical Centre: 4.00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Patrick Connolly (chair), Robert Thompson (minute taker), Gill Lewis, Stephen Binns, Angela Binns, Paul Howell, Elaine Curley, Lee Walker, Janet Thompson, Chris Blake, Marsia Stewart (Assistant Practice Manager), Dr Shashi Arora

1. Apologies had been received from Bob Blunden, Pat Blunden and Jan Gimble.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising from the minutes:
 - a. The previous meeting had asked that the CCG should circulate a letter correcting previous information that the combined practice was to be called 'The Rushey Green Group Practice' and confirming that BRMC patients should give their practice name as 'Baring Road Medical Centre', this being one of the two locations managed by the Novum Health Partnership. We were informed that such a letter will not be sent on grounds of cost. Communications regarding the change of name are the responsibility of NHS England rather than of the GP practice.

It has, however, been established that patients should identify their medical practice as 'Novum Health Partnership, Baring Road branch'. It was explained that the practice now has a single NHS reference number: correspondence from clinics and hospitals is sent to Rushey Green, but as the computer systems are merged it is accessible at either practice. Communications are sorted at Rushey Green into Rushey Green and BRMC categories.

Other points were made concerning correspondence from clinics and hospitals:

- Letters are sent online, and are not necessarily the same as the discharge letters given to patients.
 - Online messages are not always sent promptly and sometimes have to be chased by GP practice staff.
- b. There was some discussion of post-amalgamation administration and appointment issues. In particular:
 - The online booking service is currently unavailable at BRMC, and patients will need to re-register for it. At present, Rushey Green patients (who can still use the online system) are blocked from booking online appointments at BRMC.

- The text messaging service is currently being revised and will soon be fully operational.

c. The appointments system was discussed with reference to the following issues:

- The burden on the phone-answering service due to the unavailability of the online system.
- The time spent waiting for an answer when calling for an appointment.
- The availability or otherwise of appointments not booked online.
- Problems in obtaining nurse appointments.

In answer, the meeting was told that the practice aimed to increase telephone capacity; it was hoped that the restoration of the online system would improve matters, as would the introduction of a new NHS app incorporating a booking system. Telephone waiting times depend more on the needs of the patients ahead of the caller in the queue than on the efficiency of the receptionist; some appointment calls take less than a minute, others ten minutes or more and it is impossible to anticipate what will happen from day to day. For this reason, a 20 minute wait is regrettable but not impossible.

Novum Health Partnership staff, and the NHS nationally, are well aware of the requirements of patients who prefer not to use the internet; 50% of all NHP appointments are not made available online, and those offered online, if not taken up, are released for other forms of booking in good time. It was pointed out that if patients happy to use the internet actually do so, they release telephone capacity for those who have no alternative

Patients seeking non-urgent appointments may have to wait for some time; however, receptionists will soon be able to offer physician associate appointments at both branches (they are already available at Rushey Green). The training and role of physician associates was outlined; it is hoped that they will be able to help with a wide range of less serious problems, thus reducing the pressure both on GPs and on A&E services. Physician associates are of course trained to refer matters of concern to their supervising GP.

BRMC now has its full complement of nurses; problems in arranging appointments have arisen because their rotas are only now being finalised, but the situation should improve very soon.

d. It was agreed that the Patients' Group would like to promote a support group for COPD patients, as discussed in previous meetings. Dr Arora agreed that NHP's lead nurse should be asked to advise on how this might be done.

4. Surgery Report

Most issues which might have arisen in the surgery report had already been covered; DNA figures were unavailable due to the reorganisation of the computer system.

5. AoB

- a. Some concern was expressed about the ongoing problem of parking at or anywhere near both locations. Clearly these issues are not under the practice's control.
- b. It was noted that the Patients' Group is not mentioned on the website, and that there is no notice about it in the waiting room. Both issues will be rectified as the reorganisation continues.
- c. It was reported that a BRMC patient had been sent to Rushey Green for an appointment. Dr Arora responded that such an appointment should have been (and probably had been) offered only as an option to allow the patient to have an appointment earlier than would otherwise have been possible.
- d. Robert will email members of the group who have not attended for some time to ask if they wish to remain on its mailing list.
- e. Concern was expressed about the security of the building and staff at quiet times in the evening, when there are very few people around. Dr Arora said that she took the point but had never herself felt threatened; the staff have panic buttons, and the cost of a security guard would be prohibitive. People with serious mental health problems would not be deterred by, for example, male rather than female receptionists.
- f. There was some concern that BRMC does not have a dedicated Practice Manager and that the overall manager of NHP is a GP. In response, Dr Arora clarified the management structure. The same levels of responsibility are being exercised, and the same procedures are being followed, as previously; however, NHS England expects efficiencies to be achieved by merging 'back office' tasks. The strategic management of a GP practice requires GP expertise, and it is at this level that Dr Chan operates; administrative tasks are carried out in each branch as before, under the overall supervision of Marsia Stewart.
- g. No decision had been taken about merging the two Patients' Groups. After some discussion, it was agreed in principle that it was desirable for some, but not all, meetings to be held jointly for both branches; the possibility of having four joint meetings a year, two at each branch, was considered as an option. The conclusion was that the Rushey Green group should be asked for their views and the issue be discussed again at our next meeting.

6. Next meeting: Thursday 6 December, 4.00 p.m.

The meeting was declared closed at 5.30

