

School Lane Surgery

Patient Reference Group (PRG)

Thursday 20th October 2022

PRESENT:

Maralyn Azzopardi, Simon Cole, Keith Eldred (Chair), David Galloway, Frank Prendergast, Peter Stagg, Judith & Mike Sweeting – Patients

Carly Bassett (Practice Manager), Sarah Prior (Assistant Practice Manager), Sandy Smith (Nurse Manager), Natalie Stenson (Admin & Reception Manager) – Practice

Robert Howes-Ward (SLS partner and part of the ICS, which has replaced the CCG) – Guest Speaker

APOLOGIES: Marjory Halfpenny, Kathy John, June Lewis, Charles Napier

THE AGENDA

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| 1. Previous minutes | 7. Staffing |
| 2. HLC Development | 8. Practice services: Wellbeing Integrated Triage |
| 3. COVID + Flu update | 9. Practice services: Dermatology |
| 4. Healthwatch report | Quick ref PC MH Triage Guide |
| 5. GP Patient Survey | 10. Other business |
| 6. Enhanced Access | |

This evening we enjoyed the (online) company of Robert Howes-Ward, who thanked the PRG for his invitation to join us, and we are grateful to Rob for fitting us in to his very busy schedule in order to bring us up to date. Rob is a partner in the SLS practice and also a member of ICS, which means he is a mine of useful information when it comes to plans for the surgery and the development of the HLC.

1. Previous minutes

No issues were raised regarding the previous minutes.

2. HLC Development

Each member of the group was handed a plan of the proposed development of the HLC, and we are asked not to divulge any of our discussion or the plans themselves with those outside of the PRG.

Thetford is expanding and there is the large Kingsfleet development to the north of the town, where some 5000 new homes are to be built, bringing with it a significant number of new patients who will be looking to sign up with a GP surgery. As part of the development deal the builders are obliged to provide some new healthcare facilities, though they will not begin construction until well into the process and it is likely to be around 15 years before they become operational. This could mean that our surgeries may struggle and management teams are now asking themselves how we will cope. Whatever comes to pass, both the School Lane and Grove Lane surgeries will remain in the centre of town.

The HLC was built with too much office space, which has meant that over the years we have seen these parts of the building much underused, and more clinical space would have been useful. There is a swathe of unused space and when SLS was asked to get involved with the new development of the HLC there was no hesitation, and with the focus now on more clinical services, it will give a new lease of life to the building. All this has been made possible since Thetford has been able to jump the queue for new investment, since another area of Norfolk has dropped out of the bidding.

The plan is to expand the car park at the HLC. With more outpatient clinics and diagnostic services, this will see an increase in patients visiting the building; thereby promoting the idea of more treatment in the community and saving a trip to one of the regions hospitals. Addenbrooke's, Papworth and the West Suffolk are involved in the discussions about potential use of the building, but because we are on the border of Norfolk and Suffolk, it has meant our two closest hospitals can't talk to each other! Pathways of Care has created challenges for our border situation, and SLS battles 'tooth & nail' to try and remind those in power that we have a unique situation here.

One of the first things to be tackled at the HLC is temperature control. On hot days it can be particularly difficult for people and this situation should be improved.

The PFI contract is not yet discharged and the NHS is still paying rent for use of the building, though this is at a fixed charge: the more patients use the building the cheaper it works out.

3. COVID + Flu update

By the end of October, the surgery will have dedicated 291 clinical hours to the COVID vaccination clinics, mostly at weekends, and 135 hours to the flu vaccine clinics. There have been fewer venues operating this time around, with the HLC remaining busiest, and there has been a drop in the numbers taking up the jabs. Other venues could open up if there is a surge in demand, but only time will tell. Patients are now less afraid than they were as COVID would appear to be losing its potency.

NHS England is responsible for the overall distribution of the COVID vaccine and SLS is delivering just as many jabs as in the first, second and third waves, by pulling in patients from elsewhere. It takes just 2 minutes per vaccination at the clinic and most patients are now on their fourth jab. SLS is committed to pulling our weight, especially when the demand is down. The vaccine is still saving lives.

GPs have struggled to get the message across to the public that with 1,806 fewer qualified doctors working in General Practice since 2015, and with those there now having to look after many more patients, there is more likely to be a delay before they can be seen for non-urgent appointments. Politicians of all parties can frequently be heard to be promising quicker access to a GP, but with current numbers as they are, this is an impossibility. People are already having to wait longer for operations and are becoming more unwell in the process. SLS is holding its head above water but there is lots of paddling under the surface; while the situation with A&E and the ambulance service is starting to ring alarm bells, as can be seen in the news media.

In the modern NHS there are more services to deliver and this will require more staff to give treatment, specialist nurses and practitioners etc. Patients are more aware now and have become more demanding.

4. Healthwatch report

Each member of the group was handed a copy of the Healthwatch School Lane Surgery Feedback report.

The Healthwatch team visited the surgery in September and had a good look around, talking to members of staff and gathering patient opinions; they were very positive about both the surgery and our patients!

5. GP Patient Survey

The latest GP patient survey was mailed out randomly and SLS was deemed to be performing extremely well, gaining a 94% approval rating - 72% being the national average - making it the second highest scoring GP Practice in the whole of Norfolk. This is a brilliant result and congratulations were offered all around. Patients are not always able to see their preferred GP, but still rate the surgery highly. Needless to say, the surgery is very pleased with the results.

6. Enhanced Access

Enhanced Access means there is more services available outside core hours, in the evening and at the weekend (COVID clinics). From December it is hoped there will be more evening GP surgeries.

As a matter of interest, the increase in telephone appointments has seen a reduction in DNA.

7. Staffing

There are a number of new faces at SLS. A new GP has joined the practice, he being Dr Sookar. We have a new Enhanced Recovery Worker in the shape of Katya. Mo is a physiotherapist now attached to the surgery, and we have a new Advanced Practitioner coming from the West Suffolk Hospital. There is also two new receptionists and one admin, plus a Compliance Manager.

SLS has got through a fair number of receptionists over the years, not least because some are not able to take the horrible abuse that can sometimes be hurled at them by irate patients. In such instances, when it occurs over the telephone, it is put down and a letter is sent.

8. Practice Services

Wellbeing Integrated Triage

This system of Triage is to roll out and should respond to requests for help from patients within 4 hours, and there will be a 'call back' to ensure the correct help is being given, or has been given. This help will include a wide range of things, anything from physical exercise to financial advice. It is also designed to help those with personality disorders, and this is where our new Enhanced Recovery Worker, Katya, will be put to good use.

Dermatology

Patients with skin problems are to be fast-tracked, using a photo-based system called Cinapsis: this is a clinical communications platform that gives your GP access to specialist advice and guidance without delay, exactly when they need it. What appears to be a slightly abnormal mole can sometimes turn out to be a malignant growth, and the sooner these things are treated the better the outcome is likely to be.

A specialist camera will be available at the surgery to take the relevant photo(s) for referral.

Quick reference PC MH Triage guide

The above-named guide was handed out to each member of the PRG, it comprises the various Triage methods used when referring patients for mental health treatment.

10. Other Business

- a) The national **Personal Patient Records** system has fallen by the wayside, with everybody seeming to favour a different method. GP Records work well but if they are not all on the same system then it won't work. SLS and the West Suffolk Hospital have linked up via a direct contact system for records and it performs very well.
- b) **Surgery website:** the surgery will look into the available options for vaccinations via the drop-down menu on the website, since shingles seems to be a glaring omission?
- c) Invitations for guest speakers to be considered:
 1. Marie-Lyse Numuhoza of Future Projects: social isolation and loneliness.
 2. Creative Arts East: social isolation and loneliness.
 3. Healthwatch

NEXT MEETING: Thursday 15th December, 7 pm at School Lane Surgery

GLOSSARY:

CCG – Care Commissioning Group

DNA – Did Not Attend

HLC – Healthy Living Centre

ICS – Integrated Care Systems

PFI – Private Finance Initiative

SLS – School Lane Surgery