



Minutes of a Meeting held at 7pm on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at Haddenham Medical Centre

Present David Gregory (Vice Chair) Dr Mark Howcutt, Ciar Munn, Brian Rogers, Dr Sarah Howcutt and 34 PPG members

1. The Vice Chairman welcomed members and gave apologies for Barry Lynch(Chair) and his wife Caz, who both have tested positive for COVID.
2. Dr Sarah Howcutt gave a presentation on the subject of New Year Resolutions and why they are so difficult to keep

We were all assured that it is not all just down to us, and the amount of discipline we have but due to a range of many linked factors. Using the example of obesity, Sarah discussed how many linked factors will all affect how well we tackle these issues, including genes and our behaviour, social influences, access to the right types of food as well as the amount of activity we do. Many of our choices (influenced by our brain) are also affected by ‘choice architecture’, something supermarkets and other business make good use of. Eye level products may not always be the best for us, but will be the ones we are drawn towards. Sarah described how our brains are naturally ‘risk averse’ and how we like to avoid guilt (attributed to S. Freud).

Solutions to keeping those resolutions were then given. Pick friends wisely (those who will encourage, who may be on the same type of resolution e.g. Dry January or weight loss. Avoid going to places where you might find it difficult to keep resolutions e.g. the place where you know you will eat the wrong type of food. Make decisions slowly – a suggestion to make a detailed list before shopping and keep to it. This can also help you be focussed on the shop and less distracted by those unhealthy food offers. Finally, set yourself an achievable target, however small. This can then be added to, rather than a goal which you will soon feel is unattainable and just give up.

Questions; David G asked about the role of multinational companies and how to counteract their marketing. Sarah described how social media is often used now to attract young adults especially and marketing budgets are much bigger than those available to science research. Ethical rules also prevent some research being carried out, but these rules don’t apply to marketing. David also asked Sarah for her thoughts on big Pharma and the use of pills e.g. for weight loss. Sarah stated how diet pills can be useful but they will then affect many of the other factors which are also involved in weight loss.

3. Practice Report – Dr Mark Howcutt and Ciar Munn  
Ciar discussed how the New Year got off to a good start with 2 new nurses, Jaqueline and Caroline now providing cover from Monday to Friday. 2 Health Care Assistants were also employed but unfortunately this week they have both pulled out from the jobs as they had been offered a better deal somewhere else. Hopefully there will be some better news re. these roles by the end of the week. Sarah has also left so there are currently no Health Care Assistants. Cover is being provided where possible but this is why there may have been some issues e.g. with blood tests.

They have not yet been able to replace Dr Morley and are currently still advertising the role. Dr Howcutt added that there is a huge demand for GPs at the moment and many practices in the area are all advertising. There are interviews planned and it is hoped that there will be better news soon. Currently, the practice is a doctor down but as a training practice, we do have some ex trainees who have been keen to come back and do some regular work (Dr Mayer, Dr Jamal and Dr Mohammed). The intention is still to find a permanent replacement. David Gregory had asked Dr Howcutt to comment on respiratory illness as it is so prevalent currently. He detailed how Covid cases are currently rising in the community, as well as high rates of influenza. A virus called RSV which can cause bronchiolitis in babies and also affect older people also has high rates as well as a bacterial infection called Mycoplasma. It can be difficult for doctors as people are not now always testing for Covid (and it is not a requirement now) and it is useful to know which virus you are dealing with. Dr Howcutt also suggested that we should all continue with good hand hygiene (soap and water best to avoid norovirus rather than hand gels). Masks are still a good idea if you have any symptoms and avoid mixing with people if you are unwell. All actions should be with the aim of reducing the risk from your illness to other people. Test for Covid and isolate until negative.

Lloyd Griffiths asked Dr Howcutt what he thought the block on recruiting GPs was. He answered that there are not many doctors out there choosing GP work, some prefer the flexibility of locum work or jobs based abroad. Brian R asked if this was the same issue for nursing staff. Dr Howcutt replied that it is slightly different as many practice nurses who have been in the role for many years, are now retiring at the same time. Hospital work within the NHS has also been made more attractive, with clear career progression.

A question as to the number of 'full time' staff at the practice was answered by Dr Howcutt, describing the 2 full time doctors plus many other staff who make up the full time equivalent roles between them. There is no set answer to the number required to run the practice though Dr Howcutt feels that we need currently one more doctor of at least 3 days/week.

A question as to the number of extra patients taken on recently was answered by Dr Howcutt. The number currently stands at around 9500, compared to about 7000 when he started over 20 years ago. We currently have more Drs relatively per patient than we did then so is not currently an issue for the practice. David G also added that he is aware how much more administrative work there is now for doctors to do.

4. PPG Review of 2023 – presented by David Gregory on behalf of Barry Lynch  
“The PPG with the aid of the practice carried out a membership drive in 2023 using the patient messaging system. We received 303 new members from the online applications that were received. That brings our total PPG membership now to 1245.  
There is currently no initiative to sign up new patients to the PPG when they join the practice and this needs to be discussed between the PPG and the practice. We particularly need some of the younger families that are moving into Haddenham to join the PPG.

The IT used by the Medical Centre and the NHS in general has become more prolific and more complicated for patients. To provide some support in this area the PPG has set up an IT Helpdesk which is managed by volunteer tech savvy PPG members. The key systems on which help can be offered are the NHS app, Patient Access and Accurx (the practice

appointment contact system). You can simply complete our online form and tell us about your problem and one of our 'techies' will get back to you.

We had hoped to commence a patient education programme in 2023 but we have not been able to obtain any support from our local Phoenix Primary Care Network. The PPG believe that an important way in which pressure can be reduced on the NHS is for patients to take more responsibility for their own health and to monitor their own conditions. Typical areas where support groups could be effective are;

Weight Loss Groups (for example programme provided by of X-pert Health or similar)  
Diabetic Control (for example programme provided by of X-pert Health or similar)  
Training Workshops for online services such as NHS app  
Social Prescriber and Wellbeing Groups.

Your PPG has continued to make efforts to engage with the organisations that control our local primary care delivery. These are the Phoenix Primary Care Network and the BOB ICB (Bucks Oxford Berks Integrated Care Board). As I have already said we have met little success trying to encourage the PCN to work with us on patient education and in the case of the BOB ICS we attend a group of PPG chairs named the 'Engagement Strategy Group'. The PPG chairs on this group are very unhappy about its lack of achievement and believe the BOB ICB is just trying to tick boxes and appear to be supporting patients when the reality is the reverse."

#### 5. Resignation of David Gregory and election of new Vice Chair.

David confirmed that he will be standing down as vice Chair of the PPG. He does intend to continue his role in the working group and in promoting the Patient Education Programme (PEP), encouraging patients to adopt a healthier life-style.

This programme is designed to demonstrate to patients the importance of adopting and maintaining healthy life-style. In particular, avoiding obesity, which is growing at an alarming rate, especially amongst young children. 50% of children in their first year at school are overweight.

Topics addressed by PEP;

The importance of a healthy diet

The need to eat fresh food

How to prepare healthy meals

Foods to avoid eg ultra processed foods, sugar

Identifying harmful additives in ready meals and fast food

Importance of exercise

Stimulation of contact with others.

We cannot afford to go on spending more and more on medication and clinical interventions. The NHS spending in 1990 was 5.1% of GDP compared to 11.3% of GDP currently and it continues to increase. Obesity issues alone account for half of the total NHS budget. For example Type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, Heart problems, Mobility problems. The population is living longer but in poor health.

X-pert training programmes – we have identified a professional education programme called XPERT which is already having considerable success in this area. However, we need medical staff and finance in order to launch this programme as part of our PEP initiative. The source of this funding and staffing can only be the PCN at present. However the PCN has been busy bailing out the water from the sinking ship which is the NHS. Whilst they continue bailing, the water will continue to pour until the boat sinks. Our proposal is to plug that hole to stop the water from coming in by concentrating more effort on prevention of illness through life-style education via PEP and XPERT. I am pleased to say that this proposal will now be discussed again with the PCN on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

The election of Brian Rogers as the new Vice Chair of the Haddenham Patient Group was passed unanimously by a show of hands from the members.

6. A.O.B. none
7. Date of next meeting. Dr Howcutt will confirm a suitable date for a meeting in March.
8. The Vice Chair thanked the members for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.