

Do You Want to Help Shape GP Services?

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG)

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GP Practices in Oxfordshire want to broaden patient representation on their patient participation groups (PPGs). These groups are made up of patients who are interested in supporting practices with the services they provide to patients.

PPG members act as a 'critical friend', providing an opportunity to work in a very informal way with practice staff to help them improve their services. Patients who currently undertake this role in the county describe how their voice can make a real difference to practical things such as helping to improve car parking at surgeries and make services generally more effective for all patients.

PPGs also allow patients to learn more about health issues and how the wider NHS works, providing them more knowledge and better insight to make informed views on how to improve services.

PPGs share some of their views and comments with commissioners at Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) to help develop health services for the whole population across Oxfordshire.

Some PPGs meet face to face at regular meetings, whilst others act as a virtual reference group, providing comments on plans via email. No experience of this type of work is necessary, and joining a PPG doesn't need to take up too much time. All PPGs welcome people from different backgrounds and communities to ensure their views and needs are being represented.

Louise Wallace, Lay Member (Public and Patient and Involvement) at OCCG, said: 'Patients must be at the heart of decision making about their care and their views are important in shaping services for themselves and others. If you're interested in having a say in the way

your local health services are delivered, getting involved with your practice's PPG is a great place to start. This is important because surgeries are keen to ensure PPGs are representative of their practice population.'

A case study – the development of Goring and Woodcote PPG

Jeremy Hutchins is the Chairman of Goring and Woodcote Surgery's PPG in South Oxfordshire and has been actively involved in his patient group since it launched in 2007. The PPG now has about 200 members.

Jeremy said: 'I have seen the PPG grow in size and effectiveness during this time. We now have nearly 200 members and a core committee of 12 providing support and advice to practice GPs and staff. We are greatly valued by the practice. Over the past two years our activities have included:

- A series of public meetings dealing with important subjects including dementia, end of life care, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and the future of general practice.
- Annual surveys that have helped improve services provided by the
Helped the practice to introduce the effective use of the Friends and Family test.
- Worked closely with the practice to develop and encourage patient self-care where appropriate.

Jeremy added: 'I would encourage anyone who wants to further improve health services to join a PPG – it has given me a great deal of satisfaction knowing we are making a difference to patient care.'

If you wish to join your PPG or know more please contact your GP practice or look on their website for details on how to join.