



Guidance for Starting a Patient Participation Group

This guidance will answer your questions about how to set up your PPG and prompt wider discussion.

Stage One:

Where do we begin?

From 2015, your GP practice has a new contract with the NHS which requires it to have a Patient Participation Group (PPG)¹.

Questions to ask at this stage include:

Aims and objectives

- What does the NHS/our practice expect from PPGs?
- What do we want to achieve? What is this PPG for?
- What are the challenges and opportunities?
- Will the PPG fundraise?
- Will there be opportunities to get involved at a commissioning/strategic level if we want to?

Practicalities

- Who will chair the groups and organise meetings?
- Will we also have a virtual group? Who will set up and support that?
- Will we be working with more than one practice (some practices may decide to have a shared group)? If so, how will that work?
- How can we make sure our PPG membership truly reflects the practice population? What type of recruitment will help us do this?
- How do we make sure that practice staff know what we are doing?
- How can we make sure one GP is linked to the group and encourage two-way communication?

Resources and support

- If the practice management team supplies a PPG staff lead to work with us, what will that person do? For example, will they manage a separate database of members and provide administrative assistance/support to the Chair/group? What else can we ask them to do (e.g., manage our area of the practice website)?

¹ Guidance for GMS contract 2015/16: see [NHS Employers](#) or the [BMA websites](#)

- Where can we find information about the NHS/practice, patient feedback, surveys and NHS choices?
- What training will we need? Who will provide that?
- If we don't meet at the surgery, will the practice cover the cost of room hire?
- How will our expenses be paid and what will be covered?
- Is there any support from established PPGs such as a buddy scheme?
- Is there a protocol in place in the practice about the PPG?

Stage Two:

What do I do next?

You've thought about what you might want to achieve and now you need to gauge levels of interest.

If there is no existing group in place:

1. Identify key surgery staff – the GP /Practice Manager PPG Lead
2. Recruit members by:
 - Canvassing patients in the waiting room
 - Asking community contacts
 - Considering whether GPs could invite patients
 - Going out to other community groups to tell them about the PPG
 - Advertising on community websites
 - Identifying any other places where people can be contacted
3. Arrange an open meeting

Explain to interested patients the reasons for having a PPG and the fact that is a requirement in the GP contract. It may be useful to invite a PPG chair from another area or a member of the Patients Association. The meeting should include a Question and Answer session.

You can use the meeting to recruit members and consider how you will reach/get feedback from people who are not often heard from, are unrepresented or who don't want to or can't attend meetings. You might consider setting up an online 'Virtual' Group' for people who prefer communicating electronically.

4. Leadership and structure

You may prefer to establish a small organising committee, consisting of your Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and one or two others at the outset to plan how you going to establish the wider PPG

group (face-to-face and virtual). This is for you to decide, depending on the number of meetings you want, the numbers of patients interested and how you intend to liaise with the practice.

You will need to identify an interim Chair to get things started, for perhaps 6-12 months, prior to establishing a formal voting system or a rotating chair. You will need a Secretary to take notes of meetings with action points, and a Treasurer if you are going to fundraise (NB: you don't need to do this and not all groups do). Check on the skills available in the group; do you have someone to set up or manage a Facebook page/Twitter account, newsletter, social events/talks and so on? Before the end of the meeting, ask for interested patients' contact details and set a date/time for the first official meeting and/or recruitment event.

Stage Three

How will the first meeting work?

You've done all the groundwork and are heading towards your first official meeting. What do you need to think about to make it a success?

Agree the Agenda and circulate it in advance (by email and on noticeboards at the surgery). The agenda should include:

- Introductions
- Code of Conduct
- Discuss Terms of Reference and constitutional items
- Circulate information/template documents
- Decide whether fundraising is likely to be part of the PPG's activity
- Appoint officers (this may need to be formalised with an agreed selection process, terms of reference and limited length of service specified – gauge what people want to ensure people aren't put off).
- Agree areas for discussion/involvement

You might also want to consider circulating members' contact details (but not before they have signed to say they agree to let you do this). Keep a note of decisions and actions agreed at the meeting and who has taken responsibility for making sure they happen. These will form the minutes of the meeting and should be sent to members as soon as possible after the meeting. They could also be posted on the practice noticeboard.

NB: Another useful document is the PPG checklist: Document 5 of the PPG Information and Support Pack. You are advised to read it after you have read this guidance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What other formalities are there?

A: The only formal requirement for a small group like this is a Constitution or Terms of Reference. The PPG may be asked to provide this to the bank if you need to open an account.

Q: How much time will be needed for this work?

A: Not too much. Your involvement can be tailored to fit the time people are able to give. You will need to take into account reading time – for example, there will be papers to read before and after meetings and you need to keep up to date with these in order to be truly effective.

Q: Will it affect my relationship with my GP?

A: No. The PPG may be based at the surgery but it works independently on behalf of all patients. Your work with the PPG will not be mentioned in your own medical records, neither should it influence your care. PPG records – for example, minutes and lists of members – are completely separate from your personal medical records.

If your Doctor is responsible for making some of the changes in the practice, he or she will be aware of general feedback received via the PPG but that will be anonymised. However, it is worth noting that patient members of established PPGs report improvements in relationships. Patients gain a better understanding of the NHS and primary care and feel more knowledgeable and confident about using the NHS (e.g., being able to access the right type of care, in the right place at the right time, and generally feel more empowered when managing their own health).

Q: Who else will be able to access my contact details?

A: Your contact details will be kept safely and securely and will only be used for PPG purposes. They will not be shared with anyone else without your consent.

Q: Does the PPG need to open a bank account?

A: You won't need to do this if all your costs are covered by the practice and you are not involved in any fundraising. You will need a bank account if the PPG decides to fundraise to purchase additional equipment and services that benefit patients.

Most high street banks offer Club/Community Accounts and their staff will help you set one up. If you need a bank account it is good practice to have a Treasurer and at least two PPG members named as signatories, with a minimum of two signatures needed to authorise any transactions. The bank will need to see proof of identity for each signatory and your accounts will need to be audited independently each year. This aspect will need to be discussed with the Practice Manager/lead GP.