

Minutes for Withnell Health Centre Patient Participation Group

Wednesday 3rd September 2025

Patient Participants:

Jeff Cottam (Chair)	Ron Ainsworth
Bernard Melling (Minutes)	Sonia Sandland
Amy Miller	Lynne Lynch
Janice Scanlon	Gillian Tasker
Ann Christopher	Tracie O'Gara
Janet Horton	Janet Melling
Hazel Hebson	Mike Matulewicz
Margaret France	David Wood
Gillian Ainsworth	Karen Bretherton

Attendees from Withnell Health Centre:

Dr Ann Robinson
Nicola Phillipson
Kirsty Craney

Welcome and Introductions

A new member, David Wood, joined the group. A warm welcome and introductions were made to David by members present.

1. Apologies

Received from: Alan Martin (Vice-Chair) and Audrey Perry

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (22nd May 2025)

The group accepted the minutes, circulated by email, from the meeting on 22 May 2025 as a true record.

3. Matters Arising/Action Table

Jeff referred to the action table and the group reported on actions carried out since the last meeting. A number of issues were carried forward to the next meeting (see action table). There were no further matters arising.

4. Feedback from Patients/Surveys

A table of feedback from the patient surveys received for August was circulated by Nicola (June & July to follow). There were 328 responses in total and once again the responses

were overwhelmingly positive with 316 responses identified as being in the very good or good categories. Only 12 responses were in the poor or very poor categories. Of these, minor issues included comments relating to the waiting room being overcrowded and stuffy, some frustration at cancelled appointments, painful phlebotomy experience and delays to be seen. It was agreed that these issues were very minor and were insignificant in number compared to the large number of excellent responses received so were not considered to be of any real concern.

5. Surgery News & Practice Update

Nicola provided the update report. Another new receptionist has been appointed and has now commenced work. Andrea, the new surgery nurse, has been appointed and will commence her role next week. She is replacing Elizabeth. Nicola confirmed that this now brings the staffing to its correct establishment.

There will be a flu clinic on Saturday 4th October alongside a coffee morning to raise funds for charity. There was also discussion regarding a flu clinic for children.

Dr Moitra is back working in Gaza but she will return to the practice the last week in September. She has one session at the surgery on Mondays.

6. Patient Feedback Received via Email & Suggestion Box

Jeff expressed his concern at the limited feedback being received by these routes. He explained that he felt the feedback received from the “Friends and Family” feedback process, whilst extremely useful and informative, focuses specifically on a patient’s recent visit whereas the idea of the dedicated email address and suggestion box provides an opportunity to consider wider issues. There had been no emails received via the dedicated email address in the last 3 months and only 2 feedback slips had been posted in the suggestion box. One suggested a clock should be put on the wall and the other, whilst stating that the practice was “doing brilliantly”, also suggested that the public swimming hours at the Brinscall baths should be advertised in the waiting room. It was agreed this was a sensible idea. **Action NP/KC.** It was commented that there is now an Aqua aerobics class every Tuesday at the baths from 3pm to 4pm but that booking is essential. Availability of the facility for the general public was briefly discussed. The number of public swimming sessions is apparently limited due to the provision of lifeguard support which is difficult for the Council to source.

7. Communication Improvements

Following on from the issues discussed in the previous agenda item, there followed a wider discussion around how we could improve our communication both to and from our patients. Jeff commented that he felt many patients are still unaware of the existence and role of the PPG and how they can help shape the future of services provided at the practice by talking to us.

The Newsletter which contains useful information was discussed and how we are struggling to circulate this effectively. Jeff explained that he had posted it on the Brinscall, Withnell, Abbey Village & Wheelton Facebook page but he did not believe it had been posted on the Practices Facebook page or the Practice website. Unlike with the first edition we had not printed and circulated any hard copies of the June issue either. It was questioned why the newsletter could not be circulated to all patients via text, or perhaps by texting a link address to its location on the web. It was uncertain whether this was a potential data protection issue and it was also explained that there are cost implications for the practice.

Some members felt that newsletters in general are not often read, believing that it may be more effective to drip feed information as and when this becomes available. Discussion continued on the appropriateness of social media communication. There was a general feeling from the group that the Brinscall, Withnell, Abbey Village and Wheelton Facebook page is well read and would be a good media source to use due to its frequent use by the local population for communicating useful news and events. It was also questioned whether it would be useful for the PPG to have its own Facebook page.

Since this was clearly a complex topic, which needed a more detailed discussion, it was agreed that we should form a dedicated communication focus group involving interested/knowledgeable PPG members who could meet and formulate an effective communication plan. This would then be fed back at the next meeting for discussion and agreement. Jeff agreed to email members to try and get a group together. **Action JC**

8. Patient Participation Group Networking

It was noted that this topic had been discussed at the last meeting but since there had been no feedback received from the other contacted PPG groups within our PCN Jeff informed the group that he had recently contacted Ros Millington, the PPG Chair at Library House (a different PCN) to discuss and share thoughts and ideas. Jeff explained that in this discussion Ros had mentioned that they were looking to create a PPG newsletter for Library House and she was interested to learn that we already had one. Our last two editions had therefore been shared with her. Jeff had also asked Ros how well they communicate with patients and it transpired that Library house have similar issues to ourselves with limited feedback being received from patients other than via the F&F responses. Jeff asked the group if there would be support for a wider engagement with other PPGs outside our PCN and this was generally accepted as a useful way forward.

9. Garden Space Development

It was agreed that the garden rota has worked well over the summer months and PPG members who have been involved were thanked for their efforts. The rota continues until mid-October. There was discussion about how the garden is maintained over the winter months eg replanting with winter flowers.

Ron and Gillian have provided new signage (made out of wood and carved with the name) for the 'Well Being Garden' which has now been installed, clearly directing patients to the garden area. Ron & Gillian were thanked for sorting this. There was some discussion as to whether we could widen the group of volunteers to include interested members of the villages to make it clear that this is a community space.

There was discussion regarding installing either a lockable tap or a water butt to provide watering facilities. A tap was felt to not be very environmentally friendly, the idea of a water butt being preferred. Lynne kindly donated a water butt.

It was decided that rather than continuing with a garden duty rota we should establish a Garden Group to oversee the development and maintenance of the garden going forwards. Gillian agreed to coordinate this. A group of volunteers who wished to be involved was agreed in the meeting and the names of these volunteers were forwarded to Gillian.

Action GA

A further issue considered was how to open up the garden to the local community. There will be an opportunity to showcase the garden at the Coffee Morning/Flu Clinic on the 4th October. It was felt that this would provide a good opportunity to widen the involvement of the community. Lynne, Janice and Gillian volunteered to assist on the 4th. Other members of the Gardening Group will also be involved.

It was suggested that we approach a local garden centre for plant donations eg bulbs and winter pansies. It was also recommended that we approach the Parish Council for financial support for the garden. Jeff agreed to contact Bernard Goulding, Clerk to the Parish Council. **Action JC**

10. Pharmacy Issues

It was noted that issues with the local Pharmacy service had been discussed by the PPG previously so prior to this meeting Jeff had emailed the group to see if there were still issues worthy of further discussion. There were a number. Feedback received suggested that a key concern seemed to be the lack of availability of certain drugs. It was mentioned however that this is not a fault of the Pharmacy itself. It was noted that this is a nationwide distribution issue and that supplies are being prioritised and made more readily available at the larger pharmacy chains such as Boots. Smaller pharmacies are apparently under so much National pressure that many are closing down in rural areas across the country. Other issues raised regarding our pharmacy included the closing time which was felt to be too soon, a problem with the efficient answering of telephone calls and advice on the use of over the counter medications.

It was agreed that this needed careful handling and there was a very strong view that we do not wish to alienate our pharmacy which all members felt was a service we are very lucky to have within the village community. It was felt and agreed that we should try and support our pharmacy in any as we could. Effective communication with them was felt to be important eg it would be useful if they could explain some of their issues to patients

such as the challenges they face with drug supply then there would be greater understanding and empathy. Equally it may be useful for the pharmacy to hear the constructive comments of the patients they serve. To this end it was agreed that Jeff would make contact with the Lead Pharmacist to try and open up an effective dialogue.

Action JC

11. CPR Training & Defibrillator Availability

Janice outlined the online CPR training that is available via the BHF website. It is very useful and easy to access. There is a need to communicate this availability in the local area. It was felt the newsletter could be used to assist here. Defibrillator availability in the area was discussed. At the moment this is limited and not always easy to access. It was however recognised that maintenance of the units is an issue as someone has to take responsibility for their upkeep.

12. Any other business

There were a number of issues raised:

- a) A Scarecrow Trail/Festival is being planned for the village, date tbc. The PPG would be interested in taking part when a date is finalised.
- b) PPGs are part of the NHS 10 year plan and the Patient Charter is due in October.
- c) A medical equipment bank is being reinstated at the practice, perhaps one day per week. Tracie and Lynne volunteered to assist. This will need further discussion. **Action TO & LL**
- d) Ann outlined developments with regard to the ICB. PPGs are to be audited. There are further meetings regarding Intermediate Care and the concept of 'Hospital at Home'. The NHS app can be used to book appointments; other methods are still available at the surgery.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be 6pm on Wednesday 3rd December 2025.

The meeting concluded at 19:30. Please email Jeff with items for the December agenda.

Action Sheet Matrix
Withnell Health Centre Patient Participation Group
3 September 2025

Agenda Item No.	ACTION	BY	DATE
Actions carried over from previous meeting (13 March 2025)			
4	Speak to PCN Managers to ask for Friends and Family figures to compare number and type of responses	Nicola	Next Meeting
7	Drop off box/letter box for pathology samples instead of waiting at desk. Enquire with NHS Properties	Nicola	Next Meeting
Actions carried over from previous meeting (22 May 2025)			
11	Nicola to raise issue of PPG Chair forum with PCN Practice Managers	Nicola	Next Meeting
11	Dr Robinson to raise the issue of PPG Chair forum at PCN away day on the 10 th June.	Dr Robinson	Next Meeting
Actions from current meeting			
6	Advertise public swimming hours at the Brinscall baths in the waiting room.	NP/KC	Next Meeting
7	Email PPG members to establish a Communications Focus Group	JC	Next Meeting
9	Establishment & Coordination of Garden Group	GA	Next Meeting
9	Contact Bernard Goulding, Clerk to the Parish Council re Grant application for garden funding	JC	Next Meeting
10	Contact Lead Pharmacist to open up discussions with a view to improving services for mutual benefit.	JC	Next Meeting
12	Assisting in the running & maintenance of medical equipment bank	TO/LL	On Going