

# **Patient Reference Group (PRG)**

## **Ainsdale Medical Centre**

### **Introduction**

Patient Reference Groups (PRGs) are an effective way for patients and GP surgeries to work together to improve services and to promote health and improved quality of care.

Please read the letter (below) from our lead patient volunteer, David Waugh, and consider whether you would like to be involved in our newly formed PRG. The group will begin its life as an on-line only forum but we will take steps to engage patients who don't have easy access to the internet as the group evolves.

If you would like to apply to be part of the initial group please complete the on-line form on our website. <http://tinyurl.com/ainsdale-prg>

### **Can you help? By David Waugh ( Patient Volunteer)**

In recent years our NHS services have undergone numerous changes and we have all been exposed to the challenges facing hospitals, A & E departments and our own GP practice. These many new demands are accompanied by a desire to open opportunities to improve the services and requirements to patients. Although the Practice staff has a good understanding of community needs they feel that to further their work, it would be a positive step to gain a closer liaison with its patients. To achieve this, it is proposed to create a Patient Reference Group that will be an active range of about thirty patients helping to inform the practice of ideas and ways to further develop services.

#### **How can this be achieved?**

I am a patient of over twenty years at the practice and live with a long term health condition (type 1 diabetes) along with my wife and two daughters. During this time we have used a number of the services offered by the practice. When I had to take early retirement due to my condition, I was pleased to assist others with long term health conditions, working with the PCT to initiate the Expert Patient Programme (an education course to assist patients manage positively their day to day lives). I was also given the opportunity to develop a modified scheme to work with teenagers and young people in the region to assist them gain confidence through this difficult time of growing up, manage their health condition and achieve a healthy lifestyle. The course was run by teenage patients with long term conditions.

I later joined the 'Southport Diabetic Clinical Champions' as a patient representative to work with NHS specialist staff to improve the care of diabetics in our area. We won a national award for the service we provided and were able to develop better patient services for

Southport. Although this local initiative had to be disbanded, I was asked to join the Merseyside Diabetes Action Group, a group of patients bringing their experience of living with the condition, the NHS services they encounter and advising on how good practices can be managed and accepted across our region. The group have a number of successful outcomes attributed to their work raising awareness and improving procedures across Merseyside.

I have brought your attention to these roles undertaken by patients to highlight the positive element of why a similar patient group at our GP's can assist both staff and patients.

### **Who can help and when?**

Time is always precious and it is realised that people often don't have the opportunity to get to meetings due to work or family commitments. It is for this reason that a virtual or online group is planned. Initially it is envisaged that questions will be raised by patients and staff, about work the Practice is undertaking to improve services. The group will use an email blog to discuss on line, at their own convenience, an exchange of ideas to raise awareness and gain opinion throughout the community. To achieve outcomes, a timetable can be set to agree conclusions and then reported to all patients by the Practice.

### **What questions are relevant?**

We might like to discuss some of the following:-

- How to manage the appointment system.
- Communication with patients.
- Meeting the needs of special groups i.e. housebound or people with young children etc.
- Assistance with health management and healthy living.

There is no limit to what can be raised and these are only generalist ideas.

If this is going to be successful we need a broad group ranging in age, people on their own, along with young or older families to reflect the community whilst both working with healthy members who visit the surgery rarely to those needing regular support.

### **Useful Links**

National Association for Patient Participation <http://www.napp.org.uk/>

Royal College of General Practitioners : Follow Home>Policy>RCGP Policy Areas> Engagement