



# Patient Participation Group Development Toolkit

Updated March 2018

Also available online at  
[www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk)  
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# Contents

Introduction  
Page 3



1. Getting started  
Page 4

2. Increasing membership  
Page 5



Local Case study: Virtual  
PPGs  
Page 6



3. Things PPGs can do  
Page 7

Local Case study: PPGs running  
education events  
Page 8



4. What Healthwatch Cambridgeshire  
and Healthwatch Peterborough can  
do to help  
Page 9

Appendices  
Page 10

# Introduction

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Our job is to make sure that those who run local health and care services understand and act on what really matters to people.

We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share what people tell us with those with the power to make change happen. We encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

Thriving Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) are an important part of patient participation and public involvement with a remit to improve local services for local people.

Patient Participation Groups offer people the chance to be involved with their surgery in a way that can help surgeries use resources more efficiently and improve services for everyone. PPGs give a surgery important insight into what its patients want and need and provide an important forum for learning from patient experience. A proactive PPG can also encourage and empower patients to take more responsibility for their own health. As a result, a strong PPG can improve patient satisfaction overall.

Every surgery should have a PPG, but how that PPG works, what it does, and who gets involved is up to each individual surgery. There are a number of resources available to help set-up and develop PPGs, as well as to help PPGs think creatively about patient involvement.

In this toolkit, we have highlighted some of the resources available, particularly around getting started, increasing membership, and thinking about what a PPG can do. We have included case studies from local PPGs. We have also listed ways that Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough would like to work together with PPGs to improve health services across the region.

# 1. Getting started

All English GP surgeries should have a Patient Participation Group, [as part of the GP contract](#). How the PPG is setup and what the PPG chooses to do is up to the surgery and the PPG itself. PPGs can be virtual or meet in person, or a combination of both. They should be representative of the patient population. PPGs can work on a variety of projects, and to a variety of aims, but ultimately, PPGs should provide an opportunity for practice staff and patients to work together to help a surgery meet the needs of the people it serves.

## A guide to getting started:

NHS England and the National Association for Patient Participation (N.A.P.P.) worked together to produce [Building Better Participation](#), a resource guide to help PPGs work effectively. The guide offers goals, questions for reflection and recommendations in four areas: Getting PPGs in place, helping PPGs work well, knowing and working with patients, and influencing beyond the GP practice.

The first goal for getting PPGs in place is: The PPG and practice have a shared understanding of the purpose and role of the PPG and how it fits with the practice.

A clear terms of reference and role descriptions for PPG members should help PPG members and practice staff to explain why the PPG exists and what it does.

You can read more of the [NAPP guidance here](#).

## Additional resources:

- Useful information sheets, tips and templates: [Community Works PPG Toolkit](#)
- Terms of Reference template: [INVOLVE Terms of Reference Template](#)
- Example Terms of Reference, Monksfield Surgery (appendix 1)
- Guide to engaging with young people: [The NHS Youth Forum Top Tips](#)
- Guide to engaging with Black Minority Ethnic Communities: [Engaging with BME communities: Insights for Impact](#)



## 2. Increasing membership

A PPG will benefit from being as representative of the patient population as possible. There are many guides available with advice about how to increase recruitment, but the key is to get out there and ask people to join. With a clear idea of how your PPG will work and what it will try to do, you can promote your PPG in the waiting room, on prescription slips, with local voluntary organisations, and online.

Remember that members of PPGs are volunteers, and can use local volunteer support organisations for information, training and resources. [Support Cambridgeshire](#) offers this type of help to local community organisations in Cambridgeshire. [Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service](#) provides support to the voluntary sector in Peterborough.

Representing the patient population can be tricky, especially trying to find a date, time and place everyone can meet. Many PPGs are turning to virtual engagement, either as a standalone group, or in addition to a group that meets in person.

Make sure any information about your PPG is up to date on your practice website. Old reports or out of date email addresses can put people off.



### Recruitment advice from Community Works

#### 1. Keep your message positive

‘Help us build a fantastic centre’, ‘come and meet other patients and carers’, ‘get your voice heard and write into the newsletter/ attend a meeting’ etc are better than negative messages like ‘without you we will close down’ or ‘dissatisfied? Come and tell us why?’

#### 2. Keep your message simple

On leaflets and posters keep it really simple: the main purpose of group, time / place and contact. Try to save detail for conversation. Use images to suggest things rather than lengthy paragraphs.

#### 3. Spread your message far and wide

Use shops, pharmacies, post offices, newsletters, Argus community pages, websites, Facebook, radio, local events, other groups and meetings, services which reach large numbers in the community eg schools, churches, practice notice boards. Try to get a member of staff in the practice to be a PPG champion, who is happy to talk to interested people and take contact details.

Download the full Community Works Patient and [Participation Group Toolkit here.](#)

## Local Case Study: Virtual PPGs

‘We decided to have a virtual list when we found that the public meetings we were calling were not involving sufficient people. We therefore spent time visiting our practice, mother and toddler groups, OAP groups, cricket clubs and many more, asking them to complete a short form giving us their email addresses if they were interested in learning more about the practice and the wider health provision. We assured them that their addresses would only be known to us and that we would ensure that they were not shared with others on the list or given to other agencies. This quickly meant we had a long list of interested people. The snag is of course that you have to regularly recruit more people as people change their providers and fail to tell you!

We have about 200 households, who receive our emails and we put articles in our local village magazines. Each year the parish councils in two of our villages arrange for every house holder to receive a free copy, so we know that every house hold has access to some of our articles, even if they are not in regular receipt of a village magazine. We have very few ethnic minority residents but have targeted those we know of when undertaking surveys. As we have visited old people’s groups, toddler groups, stroke groups, cricket groups and have had a lip reading member with a hearing dog, whilst we cannot say we have had contact with the complete range of minority groups, we have tried.

Since moving to this method of communicating with people we have been pleased to receive messages from people who had not contacted us previously.

We currently meet as a core group when we feel we have practice or local news that we feel we should disseminate.’

Pat Skelton, Chair, Haddenham Practice Group

### 3. Things PPGs can do

It is part of the GP contract that each surgery should have a PPG, but what that PPG does is up to the PPG itself. PPGs do many varied things.

Here are a few ways PPGs can support their practice:

- PPG members can get involved in different activities to collect patient and carer feedback about services.
- PPGs can fundraise, for their own or for extra practice activities.
- PPG members can be involved in recruiting new members to the PPG.
- PPGs can coordinate health education and awareness activities.
- PPG members can help check that things like the practice website and other patient information is up to date and makes sense to patients.

### N.A.P.P. guidance

‘Growing Patient Participation: 21 ways to help your Practice thrive’ lists specific examples of what PPGs can do.

PPGs provide the patient perspective by:

1. Conducting patient surveys or collecting feedback in the waiting room
2. Advising the practice and patients of new systems and treatments
3. Sharing good practice by networking with other PPGs
4. Sitting on recruitment panels for new staff, including GPs
5. Lobbying to improve a whole range of health services

The full document (and all 21 ideas) can be [downloaded here](#).



## Local Case Study: PPGs Running Education Events

‘I proposed topics and asked doctors what they saw a lot of. I used topical issues, listening with my head to the ground for what people were talking about. Having established a topic, I approached senior professionals in the subject who proved keen to come and talk to us.

I made sure I had authoritative speakers, i.e. heads of departments, senior consultants etc and advertised the fact. I included a dog on a couple of occasions; one virtual (medical detection) and one real. People like dogs!

We used social media, posters, fliers, ads on prescriptions, magazines and, importantly, word of mouth. Our ‘audience’ grew fast, from 20 to over 40. The hall became too small and a bigger one is now used. We tried to fund raise, but some events were successful and some less so. The representative GP said they didn’t want us to do that, and to concentrate on health education.

We had problems with the overhead projector, screen, misunderstandings, people who overran their slot. There was lots to learn and every session taught us something new.’

Susan Edmunds, Former Chair, Kimbolton PPG



## 4. What Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough can do to help

- Maintain and update this toolkit, based on the suggestions and shared case studies of local PPGs.
- Provide support for increasing membership, including using social media and online resources.
- Provide information and resources to support your practice through our regular e-newsletters and on our websites, for example the work we have done on providing accessible information for disabled people.
- Help PPGs praise or raise concerns about local services, based on the experiences of patients and carers.
- Help people in your GP surgery find health and social care services near to them through our free Information and signposting service. We can put people in touch with organisations that could help them and advise them what to do if they have a concern.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough want to hear about the experiences people have with local health and social care services.

We are working on different ways to make this easier; one option is to have a designated member of the PPG talk to Healthwatch about issues (good and bad) that the PPG is hearing about. That designated member could become a Healthwatch Community Listener volunteer, with access to the support and development opportunities we offer all of our volunteers.





Monkfield Medical Practice

## **Patient Participation Group Terms of Reference**

The purpose of the patient participation group is to:

- Help Monkfield Medical Practice develop and improve its services
- Act as a channel of communication between the Practice and the community
- Provide opportunities for the local community to contribute to the development of wider NHS services

The patient participation group will:

1. Contribute to practice decision-making on the development and provision of services
2. Provide feedback on patients' needs, concerns and interests and challenge the practice constructively whenever necessary
3. Serve as a 'safety valve' for dealing with concerns and complaints about the practice - representing patients but also helping them to understand the practice's viewpoint
4. Communicate information to the Practice about the community which may affect healthcare
5. Give patients a voice in the organization of their care
6. Promote good health and higher levels of health literacy by encouraging and supporting activities within the practice and promoting preventive medicine
7. Influence the provision of secondary healthcare and social care locally

The patient participation group will not provide a forum for individual complaints or the promotion of/campaigning for single issues.

The group will aim to meet quarterly, however stay engaged through use of emails and informal communications.

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