

West Area Health Forum

Wednesday 27 October 2021, 10-11:30 via Zoom (online meeting)

1. Welcome and introductions

There were 30 people in attendance. Apologies were received from Dr Rowan Brown, GP at Portslade Health Centre and West Area Primary Care Network (PCN) Clinical Director, Samantha Draper (Practice Manager) at Portslade Health Centre, and Nick Goslett from the Hangleton and Knoll 50+ Committee.

Please contact Forum facilitator Jo on joanna.martindale@hkproject.org.uk or 01273 881446 at any time with agenda ideas, comments, feedback or questions; including feedback about experiences of attending the Health Forum meetings online.

2. Notes of the last meeting

The notes were agreed as accurate.

3. Updates Hove Medical Centre, Mile Oak, Wish, Links, Benfield and Portslade Surgery representatives and Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

Wish Park Medical Centre

Greg (Practice Manager) reported the Practice:

- Had done 690 'flu vaccines, and nearly 1,200 patients (15% of its list) had received a flu vaccine. The 'flu vaccine targets run until March so this is a really good start.
- Had experienced patients attending without declaring they had Covid symptoms, which was concerning because any staff cases would significantly impact services.
- Had a female GP starting in April 2022 doing 8 sessions a week.
- Was speaking to a GP who may want to start with the Practice in February 2022.
- Had a GP and Healthcare Assistant (HCA) on maternity leave, but the HCA was being backfilled with newly recruited HCA.
- Was now finding administrative staff recruitment as difficult as clinical staff; with the Practice relying heavily on bank staff from Sussex Community NHS Trust.
- Is looking to increase its number of telephone lines ASAP, and exploring changing to the telephone system used by Links Road Surgery which has a queuing system.
- Was incredibly busy, but keeping on top of paperwork including hospital letters.

Links Road Surgery

Steve Cribbs (Practice Manager) reported the Practice:

- Hadn't done as many 'flu vaccines as planned due to delayed vaccine deliveries; including a two-month delay in vaccine provision for vulnerable people under 65 with underlying long-term health conditions, which was concerning.

- Had stable staffing levels, but was still experiencing extreme pressure due to high levels of patient demand and expectations.
- Was pleased with the improvements in its new telephone system, but noted that the new queuing feature meant that (instead of receiving an “engaged” tone when lines were busy) patients were now being told their position but could not be told how long the wait would be (as each query is different) so they may have to wait for longer than expected and take out those frustrations on a Receptionist.
- Had a great new Receptionist, Becca, who had been a vaccine hub volunteer.
- Now had a first-contact physiotherapist, Konstantinos, working 1 day a week. These sessions are already overbooked, so the Practice is hoping to offer some additional physiotherapy days each week if it can.
- Has a Mental Health Support Coordinator, Rosie, doing 3 sessions a week. Some sessions are currently held via telephone due to a lack of space, but will be face-to-face once the Practice has converted its records room to a counselling room.
- Is joining an out-of-hours Pharmacy access pilot to test a new service option.
- Has resumed its pre-Covid “open front-door” policy, which is generally working but presenting difficulties when someone attends and refuses to wear a mask.
- Is delivering the best response to patient demand that it has ever provided; but the narratives about “poor GP services” mean people expect a bad service; and can then become challenging and rude if they don’t immediately get what they want.

Benfield Valley Healthcare Hub (BVHH) (including Burwash Surgery)

Lindsay Coleman (Manager) reported the Practice:

- Was having issues recruiting a full complement of GPs, Nurses and HCAs.
- Was finding it difficult to answer the current volume of phone calls. Lindsay asked that all BVHH patients who are able to book an appointment on a computer please do so, to free up telephone lines for those people who have to use them.
- Had recruited a new Receptionist 3 weeks ago, who was currently in training, and this would reduce telephone delays. Lindsay reported the Practice was exploring solutions to improve its telephone lines, including a caller queuing system.
- Had a waiting list for its ‘flu clinics, due to delays on vaccines being delivered.

Action: Lindsay to put BVHH ‘flu clinic details on its website when they open.

Hove Medical Centre

Richard Gravestock (Business Manager), reported:

- The Practice had run several ‘flu clinics, despite delays in the ‘flu vaccine delivery (all vaccines were due to be received by the end of September, but the final delivery will now be 27 November; causing a 2-month delay for patients and the Practice’s vaccine delivery plans).
- Both clinical and non-clinical staff are working flat-out.
- He was really proud of staff and their efforts since early 2020, especially in such difficult circumstances, but had serious concerns about morale. A number of staff have reduced their hours.

- Dr Charlie Clark had started as a salaried GP in September (replacing Dr Suzi Elyas, who left in August). Dr Charlie finished his final year of GP training at the Practice in 2019/20, and is very popular with the patients.
- Dr Jessie Drake and Dr Brian Mudamburi have completed their final year of GP training and have moved on from the Practice.
- Dr Sabine Salem, Dr Emily Ross-Skinner and Dr Mohamed Omer have joined the Practice as GP registrars.
- Kirsty Bush, a Nurse Practitioner, has returned from maternity leave.
- Reception staff levels have been stable, but the workload is a lot higher now so a new Receptionist was starting next week, with another post still to be employed.
- There had been lots of line problems with the telephone system, so the Practice had ordered a new one which would give greater flexibility.

Mile Oak Surgery

The following update was sent by Mile Oak Surgery after the meeting. The Practice:

- Is still offering telephone triage for appointments (in place since before 2020)
- Is utilising and encouraging patients to submit e-consults where possible, which are usually dealt with within 72 hours.
- Has Dr Ali is starting in November 2021, replacing Dr Tarrier who has left.
- Has recruited another GP, Dr Pumphrey, to help with demand as well.
- Has appointed a replacement for Dr Anna Godwin, who goes on maternity leave in December 2021, to start from January 2022.
- Is running 'flu clinics and ad-hoc 'flu vaccine appointments.
- Is running Covid booster vaccination clinics at weekends for its patients (the only Practice in Brighton that is doing this).
- Has new Mental Health workers in place at the Practice.
- Is currently recruiting a new physiotherapist.

Portslade Health Centre

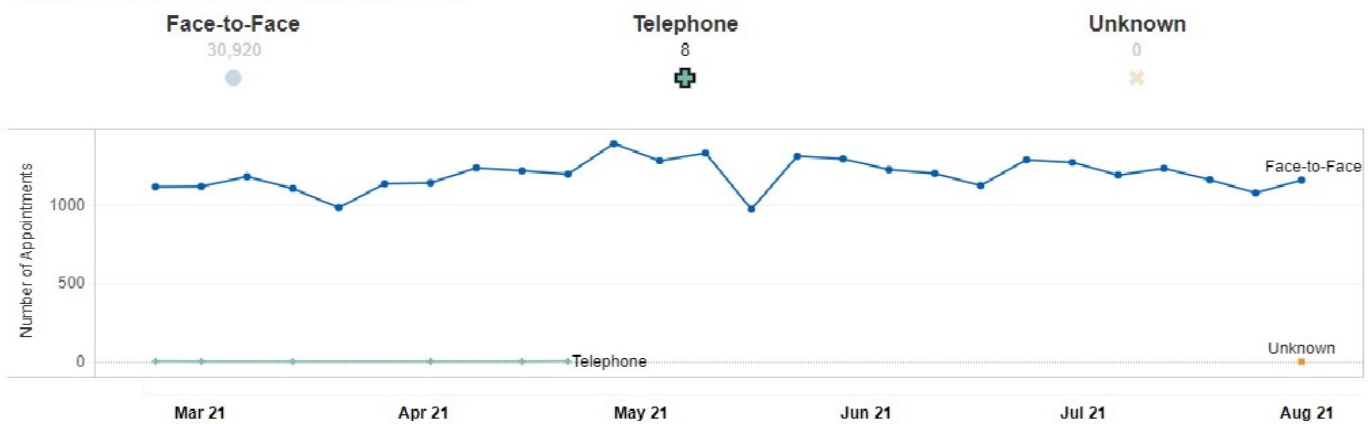
Katie noted Samantha Draper (Practice Manager) had confirmed the Practice was:

- Running a 'flu clinic on 6 November 2021
- Taking bookings for Covid-19 booster vaccines at weekend clinics (except on 6 November 2021) and also had some walk-in appointments available for 1st, 2nd and booster Covid-19 vaccinations.
- Currently recruiting 3 new Receptionists to help them continue to provide shorter telephone waiting times and high levels of patient care.

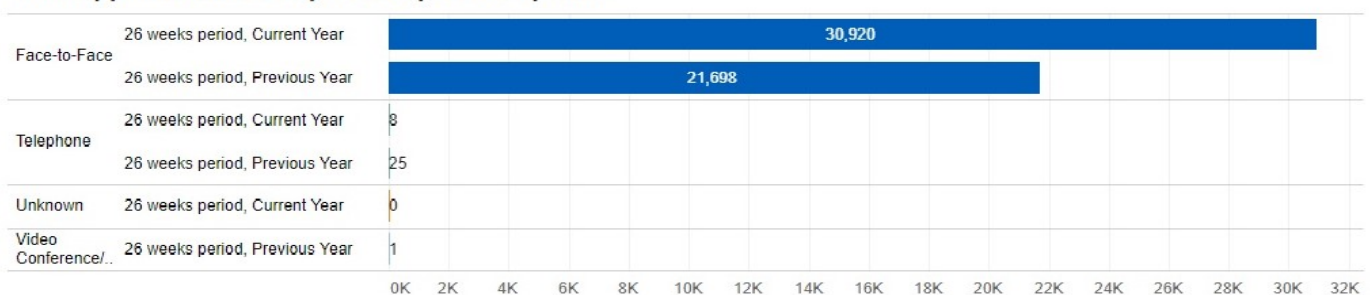
Katie noted Dr Rowan Brown had shared the Practice's appointment numbers over the last 6 months (see overleaf), as a snapshot of the workload in Primary Care.

Dr Rowan noted the data system had automatically logged all 30,920 appointments (up from 21,698 during the same period in 2020) as face-to-face, but in reality just under 50% of appointments over the last 6 months had taken place face-to-face.

Appointments broken down by Mode



Total appointments compared to previous period



All of the Practice representatives agreed there were two huge problems currently facing Primary Care which needed to be resolved.

The first issue was people expecting to always talk to a GP to get information and support; without knowing (or acknowledging) that other members of the Practice team (such as Nurses, Paramedic Practitioners, Mental Health workers, Physiotherapists and Pharmacist) may be more suited and equipped to provide an equal level of care. It was agreed that people need to stop seeing GPs as the default to answer all of their questions (e.g. use 111 or a Pharmacy instead).

The second issue was the increasingly toxic, false and unhelpful narratives about the NHS being shared by the media, the Government, and on social media such as “GP Practices not working hard enough and staff being lazy”. It was confirmed that these narratives were significantly affecting all Practices’ staff; whether reading them on social media, or from experiencing patients’ aggressive and unrealistic demands. It was noted that these issues were also being compounded by the demands from NHS England, a lack of public awareness about Primary Care’s contractual targets (such as having to split appointments between face-to-face and telephone calls), and the perception that frontline staff were “at fault” for issues which were out of their control.

Jo noted the importance of recognising current problems across the whole healthcare system caused by a backlog; so these issues were not Primary Care’s fault but were causing hardship for some patients.

Martyn Yeats highlighted that Links Road Patient Participation Group (PPG), which had 4 members present at the Forum, agreed that national narratives about GPs not seeing patients were false; and better public communications were needed to correct those imperceptions. Martyn thanked Steve and staff at the Practice for their on-going support and hard work, including Steve's attendance at the PPG's 6-weekly meetings.

Jo and Sharon both noted the importance of taking a balanced view and opposing untrue narratives, while also enabling people to give constructive feedback about their experiences and share ideas of identified improvements.

The meeting noted their gratitude to all Practice staff for their continued dedication and hard work to provide crucial services to local residents throughout the pandemic.

Action: Jo to explore option for public communications at PCN- or City-level to address current narratives about Primary Care refusing to see patients, and potentially share statistics on the increasing levels of demand on Primary Care.

Tory Lawrence, Operational Manager for West Hove Primary Care Network (PCN), reported all 6 of the West Hove PCN Practices would be invited to join a pilot using the same cloud-based telephone system (X-on), once Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (B&H CCG) had procured X-on as a new provider. The CCG will also pay any backfill costs for the Practices' current telephone contracts.

4. Primary Care Network (PCN) update

Tory reported Mile Oak Surgery is doing its own 'flu and Covid booster vaccines, and the other Practices are doing their 'flu vaccines while Here do Covid boosters. 'Flu and Covid booster vaccines have now been delivered to all West Hove care homes, and Here is working with Practices to do flu and booster vaccines for housebound patients. Here are also running weekend Covid booster sessions at Portslade Medical Centre and Hove Polyclinic (fortnightly) and have access to a Mobile Vaccine Centre. Martyn Yeats and Pat Weller MBE noted they had received their Covid-19 boosters at the vaccination centre in Churchill Square in Brighton.

In response to a concern from Mary that older people were not being contacted and offered a Covid booster appointment (except via text messages offering appointments in Crawley), Jo noted that – after Mary had raised this issue via the Forum - walk-in appointments had then been put in place at Portslade Health Centre. Tory confirmed that local residents could call 0300 303 8060 to book a Covid-19 booster appointment at Portslade Health Centre, Brighton Racecourse or the mobile vaccine unit, or turn up to the walk-in sessions. Tory noted it was best to book in advance if possible.

Action: Tory to ask BVHH to inform eligible patients about the Covid-19 booster vaccine appointments and walk-in sessions available in Hangleton and Knoll.

Jo invited the Forum members to consider whether the mobile vaccine unit offering Covid-19 vaccinations at Hove Polyclinic every weekend (instead of fortnightly),

would be more beneficial than one-off events at varying sites. The group noted the benefits of using the Polyclinic site more regularly (including easy access, good on-site security and plenty of car parking and buses and the fact that every week is easier to publicise and remember) but considered whether regularly-timed sessions were more likely to be targeted by anti-vaccination protestors? General agreement that regular sessions would be beneficial and that Hove Poly filled the gap for HK

5. Mental Health roles in Primary Care and the new Mental Health Strategy

Leila Morley, Mental Health Commissioning Manager for Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (B&H CCG) gave a presentation on the Mental Health Community Transformation Programme and PCN Developments (slides shared with minutes). Leila noted the number of people seeking help for their mental health had increased and they were being faced with issues including increased demand on already-struggling services, over-reliance on specialist mental health services, long waiting times, and lack of communication/“falling through the gaps” between services.

Leila outlined a vision to improve future services by addressing service gaps and trialling a new model of care with a mental health team based in a PCN. As a result, 2 new roles are being introduced as the first contact for people’s mental health needs in Primary Care. One Mental Health Practitioner (currently out for recruitment – and expected to be a registered mental health clinician from an NHS Trust, such as a nurse, social worker, occupational therapist, or psychologist) and 3 Mental Health Support Coordinators (non-clinical members of staff from the local community & voluntary sector, who are already in post) will work within West Hove PCN. This team is hoped to expand over the next two years.

Leila explained STEPPS EI (noted in the slides) stood for “Systems Training for Emotional Predictability and Problem Solving” (STEPPS) for people with Emotional Intensity (EI) Disorder (Borderline Personality Disorder). STEPPS EI is a practical, evidence-based treatment, based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) principles, and delivered by Sussex Partnership via the Brighton and Hove Wellbeing Service.

Rosie Cassidy, the Team Manager at Southdown, explained she managed the Mental Health Support Coordinators; who are responsible for triaging anyone who comes into the Practice with mental health issues. GP staff can book people in to attend a self-led session with the Mental Health Support Coordinator, who will listen to the person and help them create a plan to address any current issues (expanding beyond their mental health). The team has links into a range of local services, meaning they can not only support people’s mental health and wellbeing, but also signpost to support for issues such as housing, domestic abuse or employment. Rosie explained people were encouraged to try things and then feedback to their Support Coordinator to plan their next steps (with a review underway to find the ideal number of sessions), and the Coordinators were currently working with staff in the Practices and other local organisations to set up smooth referral pathways into other services. Rosie noted the Coordinators’ clients to date had given lots of positive feedback about feeling heard.

Mandy Crandale from Possability People reported B&H CCG had commissioned Possability People to run a lived experience advisory group for people who have used mental health services in Brighton and Hove, to give them a chance to feedback about their experiences. Mandy confirmed the group would welcome some new people, and you were not required to have a specific type of diagnosis or service experience to join. Mandy noted the sessions usually included service updates from Leila, as well as space for the group to talk about their experiences. The group have been meeting online but hope to meet in person before 2022 (Covid guidelines allowing). Anyone who would like to find out more or get involved in the group can contact Tasha (the group facilitator) via inclusion@possabilitypeople.org.uk or 07305 034311.

Jo encouraged the Forum to tell their friends and neighbours about Mandy's group as the chance to give their feedback on MH services at a key time.

The group discussed the increase in mental health issues being seen across society and the importance of being able to support people experiencing poor mental health; especially the high numbers of young people being affected by poor mental health, suicidal thoughts and/or being in crisis. Martyn noted the Links Road PPG were very concerned about this and wanted to reach out to schools and young people to offer support wherever possible. Leila confirmed younger people's mental health was a crucial part of the transformation programme, based on the messages the team had received about this from lots of people in the community. Jo noted the young people at HKP were involved in Foundations for Our Future looking at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and how to transform them for the future in order to provide better, much-needed access to services for young people.

Leila invited the Forum attendees to send any feedback about the programme via this online poll (<https://app.sli.do/event/iu5dxdw0>) or by email to leila.morley@nhs.net

6. Prescribe to Thrive update

Emma Drew, Director of Robin Hood Health Foundation, talked about the West Hove Prescribe to Thrive programme being run by the Hera arts programme in partnership with the Hangleton and Knoll Project (HKP), Together Co and other organisations including Plot 22 and the South Downs National Park. Emma noted Social Prescribing aims to work with people and find out what matters to them most, and put in place connections and activities to help that person's wellbeing improve, and also aims to reduce the number of GP appointments that occur for something that isn't medical.

Emma noted the West Hove programme was one of 37 pilot sites testing out what works best for Social Prescribing, and the outcomes would be shared nationally. The Social Prescribing pilots are aiming to improve health outcomes for individuals and the local community, and reduce unnecessary demand on GPs and Primary Care.

Emma reported the Prescribe To Thrive taster programme held over the summer had encouraged people to take part in a range of free activities including art, photography,

yoga, cooking and dancing. Brilliant feedback was received from the 34 people referred to the taster programme.

Emma shared a video explaining Social Prescribing made by Katie (at CommuniKate Design) which can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ND7yt9HHL4c>

It was noted that the video was already published on some Surgeries' websites and waiting room screens (including BVHH and Mile Oak), and Jo encouraged the remaining Surgeries to do this as well, and share it on Facebook.

Action: Katie to send the Social Prescribing video to Steve, Mike and Barry.

Emma encouraged the Forum members to spread the word about Social Prescribing, and shared the single point of contact for anyone wanting to get involved or find out more via phone or email: social.prescribing@togetherco.org.uk or 01273 229382.

Action: Emma invited everyone to a Social Prescribing meeting on 20 January 2022 from 9:30am – 2pm to meet the Social Prescribers and other organisations involved in Social Prescribing, feed in their thoughts about how younger people can be involved in Social Prescribing, and share a lunch together. Please let Jo know if you would like an invitation as places are limited

7. Community Update to include Digital Ambassadors

Dementia and Ageing Well

Davina de Laszlo, Public Health's Dementia Specialist, reported the Council's new Age and Dementia-friendly Planning Group had been set up on 7 October 2021, and was going to be meeting monthly (moving to bi-monthly) to find out what support and services older people want in Brighton and Hove, and mapping all existing support.

Davina reported she had been supported by HKP to set up an Ageing Well focus group of Hangleton and Knoll residents, and noted her thanks to Clare Hopkins for her brilliant facilitation and arranging of the group. Davina noted the group had discussed questions about ageing well and feeling connected to others and their neighbourhood, and their identified themes would inform the City-wide action plan. These themes had included the importance of:

1. Physical and mental wellbeing, being grateful and a positive outlook, and a focus on "living well" instead of "ageing well".
2. Different types of connections (e.g. face-to-face, online, allotments, on the bus, grandchildren) and the knock-on effects of those connections.
3. Having communities of interest around hobbies, streets, or neighbourhoods with a good community feel.
4. Telephones (landline or mobile) to keep people connected
5. Digital inclusion (for those able to use Zoom and WhatsApp to keep connected) but also noting this can exclude some people.
6. Intergenerational communities.

The group had noted barriers to connecting included older people feeling they might be a burden on others or may be rejected if they reached out. The impact of Covid had been discussed in both positive ways (appreciating things more) and negative (increased anxiety about going out).

Davina noted the group was still exploring an alternative to the (limited-feeling) term “older”, but any older people or people living with dementia in the local community were welcome to email her to become involved in the group and share their thoughts Davina.DeLaszlo@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Hangleton and Knoll Funday

Jo reported the whole-community HK Funday held in Knoll Park on 26 October 2021 had been a huge success; with over 80 adults, 50 children and 20 teenagers in attendance who all very much enjoyed the free arts and crafts, activities and food. We did not allow the 40/50 anti vaxxers who turned up to affect the day, the Mobile Vaccine Unit had already pulled out because of scheduling issues

Digital Ambassador Drop-Ins

Jo reported that Together Co and HKP were now running free, 1:1 digital health support at Digital Ambassador drop-ins every Friday morning in the IT Suite at St Richard’s Church and Community Centre. Jo asked for all local Practices to promote these sessions, as they can help their patients to manage their healthcare needs via the NHS App. For further information or to make a booking, please call Jasia on 01273 900424 or read the leaflet circulated with these minutes.

8. Future West Area Health Forum meetings

Jo thanked everyone for attending the Forum, and confirmed the 2022 dates were:

- 2 March
- 25 May
- 28 September
- 7 December

All meetings are planned to be held from 10am-12noon on at St Richard’s Church and Community Centre, with coffee available from 9:30am. Details will be confirmed nearer the time, in line with Government guidelines and Covid restrictions.

In response to concerns raised by local residents about how the feel of the Forum meetings had changed since they’d had to move online (with a shift towards a more professional-focused meeting with less input from local residents than when it was face-to-face), Jo invited the local residents to send her feedback on how the meetings could be made more open to residents if they had to continue online in the future.

NB Patient/resident meeting to discuss this to be held on 23rd November 10.30-11.30 at St Richards